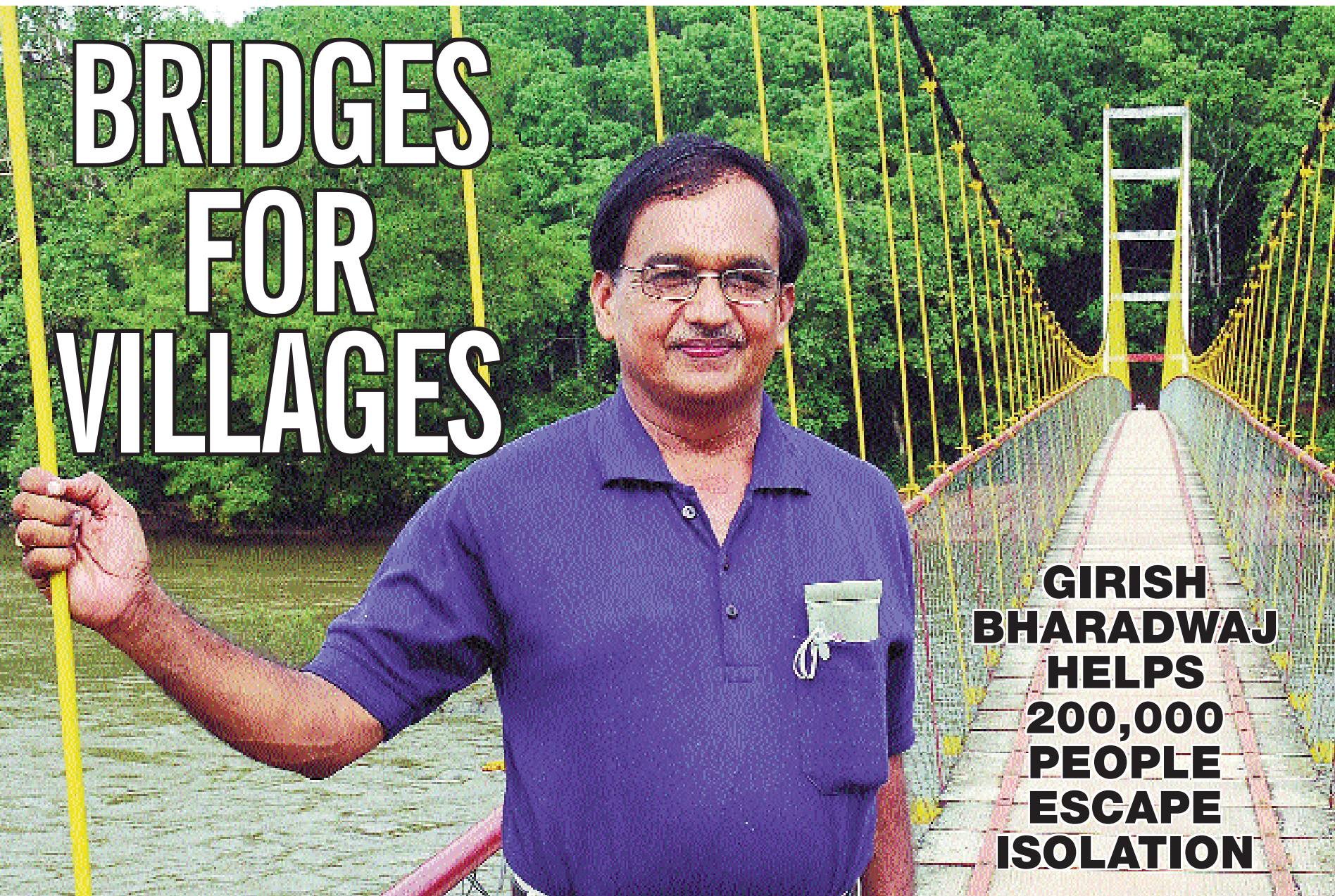


# Civil Society

## BRIDGES FOR VILLAGES



**GIRISH  
BHARADWAJ  
HELPS  
200,000  
PEOPLE  
ESCAPE  
ISOLATION**



### WHO WILL JUDGE THE JUDGES?

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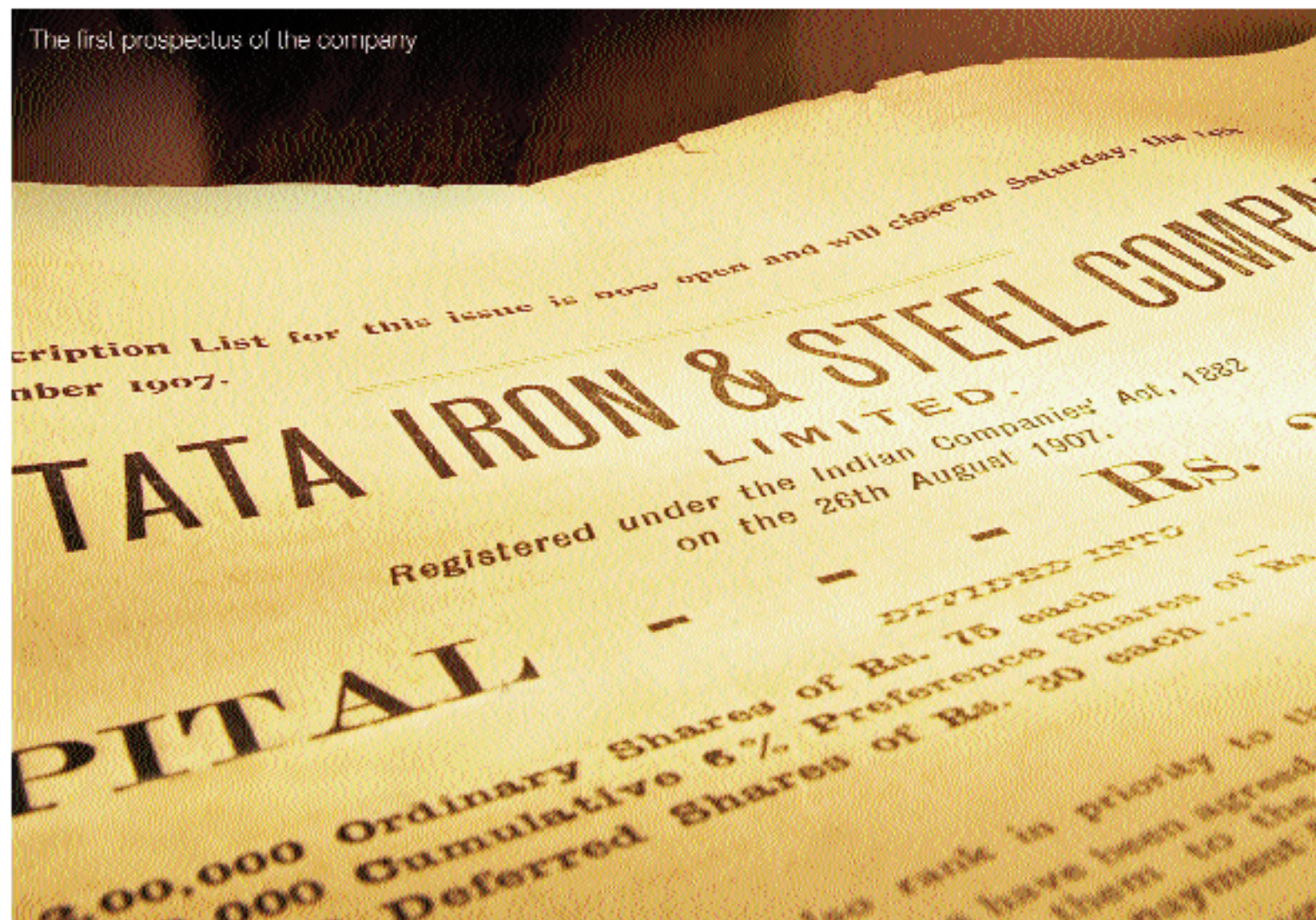
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The first prospectus of the company



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1907 - 2007





## COVER STORY

## BRIDGES FOR EVERYONE

Girish Bharadwaj builds suspension foot bridges for isolated villages on their request and with their help. His bridges are sturdy, cost little and are constructed speedily.

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Cover photograph by YAJNA

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## Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

*The bridge story*

We grew up in Kolkata watching two bridges being built. One was the New Majerhat Bridge that replaced its earlier smaller version linking Alipore and New Alipore and the other was the Second Hooghly Bridge. The first was in place when I was still a child but I remember it took inordinately long to be completed. Work on the second began in my childhood and if I'm not mistaken was opened to traffic in the not too distant past. In other words it must hold some kind of world record for delayed bridge projects. Now Kolkata has sprouted a few flyovers, but the jams rival those of yesteryears and one wonders what the future has in store.

Our tolerance of delays in creating essential infrastructure is quite amazing. Perhaps you have been witness to the mess on the road to the airport in Delhi and the rest of NH8. All those flyovers and the accompanying eight-lane highway are years behind schedule. Such examples abound all over the country. Politicians, bureaucrats and now even companies refuse to be held accountable for the harassment caused to ordinary citizens.

It is this that prompted us to put Girish Bharadwaj's story on this month's cover. The bridges that he has been building in Karnataka and Kerala have been transforming lives. They cost very little and come up fast --- as perhaps only projects supervised and supported by citizens themselves can.

Bharadwaj himself is a qualified mechanical engineer serving a rural market with solutions tailored to local needs.

Has Bharadwaj redefined the public-private partnership? Is his then a plausible and efficient way forward for quickly creating infrastructure in the interiors? Can the model be applied to distributed power, roads and water supply? Will it be a solution to the leakage of public money that these projects invariably result in?

Highways and mega bridges would have to involve big contracts and large-scale engineering. Here too methods of accountability and supervision have to change. But meeting the backlogs in infrastructure in rural India requires a flexibility and willingness to decentralise that is best represented by the bridges that Bharadwaj builds.

To Bharadwaj's story we have added the account of Toni, who is from Switzerland but has been rigging up bridges for communities in poorer parts of the world. Toni travelled to India only to meet Bharadwaj when he heard of his work. Both see their work as unleashing human potential and empowering people to live better lives. Each of their bridges provides access to markets, healthcare, education and employment.

The interview with Prashant Bhushan is significant. He has been a tireless champion of the disenfranchised. The judicial accountability movement he feels so passionately for has been gathering momentum. If it captures the public imagination, as Bhushan hopes it will, far-reaching changes could follow. Not least among them I hope will be an end to the over dependence on the courts that social activists tend to show in all matters. Many problems require social and political solutions. Perhaps we have begun expecting too much of our judges.

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# Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.



## IN THE LIGHT

by SAMITA RATHOR



DON'T CURSE DARKNESS  
LIGHT A CANDLE INSTEAD!

**New leaders**

Your annual issue was extremely interesting. I particularly liked, 'New leaders to look out for.' What was noteworthy is that all the leaders your magazine chose are working in important development areas. But I would like to see more women leaders profiled. You should report more on health initiatives for women and children.

Jane Symonds

I am simply overjoyed. Out of 19 persons who have been listed as new leaders, I happen to know seven closely. Shivaram and Anitha, Ashok Tungal, Shivaji Kaganikar, Shree Padre, Shivananda Kalave and G Krishna Prasad are all very focussed. They work their hearts out and have never run after name and fame. Great to see their efforts recognised.

Dr Sanjeev Kulkarni

The write-up on media mentors Dr Shivaram and Anitha Pailoor is an inspiring one that warms the heart of all those who work for social change without fanfare. Good job.

BK Hegde

Dr Shivaram and Anitha are doing a splendid job in farming and journalism without any expectations from anyone. They are committed and dedicated to their work.

KG Sudheendra

I want to congratulate Farhad Contractor. Can you tell me more about Sambhaav? Also please paste some pictures about him and his work on your website.

Ramlingam

**Website**

I have been a regular visitor to your website since two months. It is one of the best sites and I was amazed to know you have completed four years.

**LETTERS**

Good work. Can you paste some selected stories from previous issues on your site?

Ramesh Nair

I think your website is interesting but stories are changed only once a month. You should put up day to day information on development issues that people would like to read. Also, brief stories and announcements, like for instance an upcoming conference, workshop, campaign or protest would be useful.

Sara Jacob

**Inclusive society**

I would like to comment on Ravi Venkatesan's article, 'Innovate, Empower, Unleash.' The divide between the rich and the poor is increasing every day. Poverty eradication must be a collective responsibility.

Asif Iqbal

**SEZ controversy**

Now that the government has taken the decision to implement SEZs, it

should ensure that farmers, fisher folk, nomads and landless labour get compensation for loss of lands and livelihood. Every effort should be made to improve their lives. Otherwise, all we will have is an economy of rajas and slaves. We need strong groups who can ensure that rural folk get their due and join the middle class.

Dr Amrita Ahuja

**Disaster management**

Mihir Bhatt's article, 'Lots of money, but none for you' is a stunning indictment and a head shaking read. It proves that the marginalised will remain marginalised unless we directly help them with energetic outreach programmes and get their voices heard where it matters most.

Sunil Chauhan

You need good governance for disaster management.

AD Pawar

**Untidy India**

I would like to comment on Jug Suraiya's article, 'What the hell-it's home.' Yes, it is true we are a poor country. We have to fight for basic things. But simply pointing fingers will not do. We have to work collectively and eradicate this at an individual level. We should not be ashamed of the mess, but we should face the reality.

Abhishek

**Heritage**

Heritage is obviously something that needs a lot more attention as pointed out by Ratish Nanda in 'The value of India's heritage.' We tend to treat our heritage like pariah genus. Perhaps we ignore it because that way it gets the state more funding. As the author pointed out there are opportunities in conservation.

Rabia

“ After having given resounding judgments that RTI is a fundamental right and even political candidates are obliged to disclose their assets and antecedents, the judges have sought to box themselves out. ”

Prashant Bhushan

Senior lawyer and activist

“ Maybe we can count the tons of goods and people crossing all our bridges in the world in one year. But how can we possibly measure the giggling of the children, the pride of the adults. ”

Toni Ruttiman

Swiss builder of low-cost bridges

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# 'The opposition to big retail is

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

WHEN the Reliance Fresh retail chain, owned by Mukesh Ambani, prepared to open in Uttar Pradesh recently little did it realise that instead of a grand inaugural it would be really be winding up and paying off its 800 newly signed-on people.

What led India's most influential company to miscalculate so badly? Was the premature closure merely the result of the change of government in UP? Or was it a growing realisation among political parties that private investment in retail is bringing forth widespread resentment because of the livelihoods it puts in jeopardy?

The past year has seen violence against retail chains across the country. A Reliance Fresh store was burnt in Ranchi in April and the company's stores in UP have been the target of protests in recent months. There have been protests against other Indian retailers as well and there is concern over what effect the arrival of international majors like Wal-Mart will have.

The response of companies has been a mixture of aggression and retreat. Investments are continuing to pour in as are tie-ups, such as the blockbuster one between Wal-Mart and Bharti. ITC, on the other hand, has gone slow on its plans to roll out handcarts in Kolkata.

But who is protesting and why?

Opposition to retail chains came first of all from hawkers' organisations. The hawkers (See *Civil Society June 2007: Hawker Power*) see themselves being wiped out by retail chains in urban areas. The chains will be able to compete on price and better shop environments. They will also have extensive purchase operations that hawkers will not be able to compete with.

The hawkers have now been joined by traders and cooperatives, which fear that retail chains will build a stranglehold. There are also consumer groups that are protesting because they see retail chains finally pushing up prices when in command.

*Civil Society* interviewed Shaktiman Ghosh, general secretary of the National Hawkers' Federation on how the agitation is being organised and what the demands are. Ghosh has been leading hawkers in Kolkata for several years now. His Kolkata Hawker Men's Union has vast experience in street-level resistance to eviction. The much larger

Hawker Sangram Samiti, which represents many unions in Kolkata, has been successful in winning space and rights for hawkers when faced with drives by the Left Front government to remove them from the city's streets.

Excerpts from an interview with Shaktiman Ghosh:

**How far has your movement against private investment in retail spread?**

Initially, hawkers were agitating on their own. But now the hawkers have been joined by small traders, farmers, cooperatives and even consumers. All these groups are in dialogue with us. Do not forget that we are up against huge corpo-



Shaktiman Ghosh

*You will remember the initial agitations and burning of a Reliance outlet in Ranchi in April. See for yourself how the protests have spread since then.*

rate entities, both Indian and foreign. Reliance, Birlas, Goenkas, Mittals... it is a long and powerful list. International giants like Wal-Mart are also here. In addition we have been up against the government that has been trying to evict us in the name of improving cities. Private investment in retail is on a huge scale and as a result many people in the supply chain are being affected.

**What are your demands?**

We are saying, first, there should be no private capital investment in retail whether domestic or foreign. Second, we want the National Policy on Hawkers to be implemented. A time-bound task

force should be set up for this purpose. Third, we want social security and work security. We also want pension, provident fund and other benefits for the unorganised sector. The bill for the unorganised sector must guarantee us the right to work. We want changes in the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission because it works to the exclusion of the majority of people in cities.

**But who is really part of the Hawkers' Federation of India?**

We have the support of more than 500 organisations across the country. You can say we are represented in every major city and in very many small cities as well. Our movement is strong in West Bengal, Maharashtra and Delhi. It has picked up nicely in Uttar Pradesh. We have support in 18 districts in Karnataka. In Chennai and Bangalore too the agitation is growing.

Our movement is growing every day. You will remember the initial agitations and burning of a Reliance outlet in Ranchi in April. See and assess for yourself the way the protests have spread since then. Sharad Rao of the Bombay Hawkers'

# growing'



Union is now our president. He is one of the most important leaders of the hawkers' movement. In addition, Medha Patkar is leading us.

#### How is the federation organised?

We have our central committee and we are organising state committees. As you know, we have a national office in Delhi and this has made a huge difference to our networking. In February 2008 we will be launching a full scale protest in Delhi when Parliament opens. The government is giving us rights with one hand and taking it away with the other. We plan to bring thousands of hawkers to Delhi to protest at Parliament House.

#### What political support do you have?

I would say nearly all trade unions are backing us fully. The only exception is the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), which claims to be supporting hawkers' demands, but is not really doing so. We are getting support from the CPI, RSP and now the BJP. Sections of the Congress also support us.

Entry of private investment in retail is a national question. It will affect the livelihoods of millions of people. It is impossible for political parties to ignore the impact that it will have.

## Insurance for HIV breaks new ground

**Vidya Viswanathan**

*New Delhi*

**A** group policy for HIV positive people has been launched by the Chennai-based Star Health and Allied Insurance Company.

"The policy will cover persons in the event that they contract AIDS," says Dr Mohammed Arif, project coordinator.

The policy was originally structured for groups of 500, but a pilot in Karnataka is for 300 people. The market is 5.7 million HIV infected persons. To be eligible a positive person's CD4 count should be above 350. The policy covers a person from birth to any age.

If a positive person develops AIDS, the policy will provide a lump sum amount between Rs 50,000 and Rs 100,000. The premiums will vary between Rs 1,500 and Rs 8,000 a year. An additional premium of Rs 390 will cover hospitalisation for an amount up to Rs 30,000.

These are small sums considering the cost of hospitalisation and loss of livelihood that someone with AIDS contends with. But Star Health's intention is to make a beginning and then scale up.

The company hopes to market its insurance policy to groups through the government, non-profits and private companies. It wants to reach out to high risk groups such as commercial sex workers and transgender people.

"We are targeting premium of Rs 5 to 6 crores in the first year with an average policy of Rs 20,000 and premium of Rs 2,500. We are the only player after the Ugandan government to start an insurance product like this," says Arif. "So there is no prior data in any of the sectors that we are operating in. As the cases increase we could change the amount and premium," explains Arif.

Star Health is launching the policy as a pilot with the Washington-based non-profit Population Services International (PSI) under their Project Connect banner. "It is commendable that they decided to launch a product like this. I would not like this to remain a pilot. We want to learn for a year and sustain it," says Debapriya Sen of PSI. "Project Connect is about workplace intervention for HIV patients and we are working with corporate and government agencies. We would like this group insurance project to scale up."

PSI has done its own survey with the Karnataka Network of Positive People (KNPP). "We met the presidents of various positive people's groups and we found Star's premium high. We think people would find it difficult to pay even Rs 100 a month. Initially, when they got approval from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA), it was a group insurance for 500 people already infected with AIDS and we told them that with the free anti-retroviral drugs that are available the chances of HIV infected people getting AIDS has reduced dramatically."

The policy has already been altered with this feedback. "It is now a group insurance for 300 people who are HIV positive," explains Sen who does not want to disclose the premium they have negotiated but she says the cover will be for Rs 30,000, Rs 40,000 or Rs 60,000. The KNPP will pay 50 per cent of the premium and PSI along with Star Health will raise the remaining 50 per cent. "It is our responsibility to mobilise 300 people," says Sen.

Star Health got approval from IRDA under the general insurance category but was the first pure-play health insurer. Apollo DKV is the only other pure-play health insurer in the market today. "We have 27 products in this space. We have insurance products for senior citizens, diabetic patients and for people with critical ill-



**The policy was originally structured for groups of 500, but a pilot in Karnataka is for 300 people. The market is 5.7 million HIV infected persons. To be eligible a positive person's CD4 count should be above 350.**

nesses," says Arif.

The company has also signed up with the Andhra Pradesh government to provide cover to two million below the poverty line (BPL) families in three districts at an annual premium of Rs 66 crores under the Arogyashree Scheme. It has also got into the healthcare business and is setting up a chain of primary health care centres where insurance cases will also be screened.

Star Health was started with equity of Rs 105 crores with a 26 per cent foreign direct investment contribution. About 10 per cent has come from Oman Insurance, while the remaining 16 per cent is from private investors. The rest of the equity has come from domestic industrialists with varied interests. The company is headed by Mr V. Jagannathan, Managing Director and CEO. According to him the market potential for health insurance is at least Rs 15,000 crores of which only about Rs 1,750 crores has been tapped. Jagannathan was earlier the Chairman and Managing Director of United India Insurance Company.



# Roji Roti gets NREGA to work

Rakesh Agrawal  
Lakhimpur Khiri (UP)

HUNDREDS of villages in the district of Lakhimpur Khiri in the Terai region of Uttar Pradesh lack schools, health care, roads and electricity. In fact, the entire district seems to have fallen off the map. This region was included in the initial phase of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in February 2006.

But people found that work was given to those who knew the village power structure. The majority of them were left out. Then, out of 100 days of mandatory employment hardly 25 days of menial work were provided. Very few women and physically challenged persons got jobs, although under NREGA a minimum



**Unions of eligible labourers were formed in 81 villages. These were called Job Card Dharak Sanghs. "We do not just force our pradhan to give us jobs. We insist he issues more cards," says Chameli Devi of Khamaria.**

percentage of jobs is reserved for them.

This might have been another sad story of business as usual. Except that some people decided to change things.

The Roji Roti Samiti (RRS), a community-based organisation that has been working in 81 villages with a population of more than a lakh since July 2005, decided to mobilise people under its banner.

"We united villagers and spread awareness about the Act so that people could demand jobs and get them," said Vinod Kumar, founder, RRS. The RRS has been promoted by AIM, a Lucknow-based NGO, to strengthen the community in its fight for rights. It has played a key role in facilitating work in this backward region.

The RRS launched an interface between the district magistrate of Khiri and the villagers of Mitauli Block. A detailed plan to bring five villages under the employment generation scheme was submitted.

Then unions of all eligible labourers were formed in each of the 81 villages. These were called Job Card Dharak Sangh (JCDS). "We do not just force our pradhan to give us jobs, but we also insist he makes more

cards," says Chameli Devi, 43, an active JDS member of Khamaria village.

These unions built pressure on the pradhans and officials by staging *dharnas*, taking out demonstrations and issuing memos. They made an impact. Radhe Shyam, 38, of Khamaria village, is the most telling example. He lost both his big toes to an incurable disease three years ago. Now this physically challenged man eats two square meals a day, thanks to a job that he got under NREGA.

"The pradhan gave me 25 days work under the scheme last May when this one km long *khadanja* (a brick laden path linking the village to an all-weather road) was being built after the RRS persuaded him to do so," says a grateful Shyam. His physical condition was given due attention. All he had to do was to sit and supervise work. This year, too, a pond was dug in the village under the scheme and he again supervised work for 25 days.

The villages in this block house some Dalit families and Kurmis (who fall under the OBC category). The spillover effect of the scheme is the unity that JCDS has brought to various castes. Most Dalits had to work as daily wage labourers on the fields of Kurmis at abysmally low wages that were seldom over Rs 30 a day.

Since the employment guarantee scheme guarantees a minimum daily wage of Rs 58, (it has been raised to Rs 80), these labourers refused to work at lower wages. "Now, the Kurmis are forced to give us higher wages. Although, it isn't Rs 80 yet, we're getting Rs 50 a day," says Shushil Kumar, 34, another active member of JCDS.

The RRS has been creating awareness of NREGA since June 2006. "We took out a week-long Rozgar Haq Yatra (Campaign for the Right to Employment) that month. More than 50 people travelled from the block headquarters at Mitauli and visited all villages, informing them about the Act and what people need to do to get jobs," says Niraja Rawat, a committed

RRS worker.

A *dharna* was staged at Lakhimpur, the district headquarters. Its impact was soon visible as the chief development officer, responsible for the implementation of the Act, ordered money allegedly siphoned, to be paid back to the village account. At many places the RRS activists caught officials red-handed. For instance, in Bhudkuda village people were paying Rs 10 to get their job cards. "It was a godsend opportunity as we not only got work for the entire month, we also got back the money we paid for the job card," says Maina Devi, an active member of the village JCDS.

Since then, people have been forcing pradhans and officials to implement NREGA honestly and efficiently in other villages too.

Efforts are on to package the strategy. This is necessary to present a united front to fight powerful officials and pradhans and the implementing agencies. All village JCDS will be united at the panchayat level. Every JCDS will select three representatives who will form a wider platform. This will eventually be extended to block and district levels.

# Who will Accountability

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

HAS the judiciary in India sealed itself off from all accountability to society? Is an outdated law on contempt being used as a shield by judges? Do recent judgments have an elitist and anti-poor bias?

These and other troubling questions have been given public attention by the Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Judicial Reforms (CJAR) in its search for a transparent and accessible justice system for India.

At the core of the current storm are allegations that a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Y.K. Sabharwal, misused his position to favour his sons and some builders. Such has been the force of the campaign that the former Chief Justice has found it necessary to reply in a newspaper article to the charges against him.

But demands that Justice Sabharwal face an independent inquiry have continued to grow and now come from respected legal luminaries who believe that the reputation of the judiciary as a whole is at stake.

*Civil Society* spoke to Prashant Bhushan, senior lawyer and relentless activist, about the accountability campaign and what it is seeking.

Bhushan alleges that there is corruption in the judiciary because it is not answerable to any external institution. "This means a judge cannot be subjected to any action. So, a judge can be responsible for any kind of misconduct but there is nothing that you can do to him."

"It is an alarming situation in which we have a judiciary that has enormous powers that allow it to pass orders on just about anything at the drop of a hat and yet has no accountability," argues Bhushan.

Added to this is the law on contempt, which effectively means that it is not possible to publicise or raise allegations against a judge because that is equivalent to lowering the authority of the court.

All complaints against judges have to go to the Chief Justice and thereafter can only be dealt with through an internal process of the judiciary. This, Bhushan points out, is no substitute for an independent authority and has resulted in no serious action.

A judge can be impeached, but for that to happen the signatures of 100 MPs are needed. MPs won't sign unless there is wide publicity given to charges and a public outcry to match.

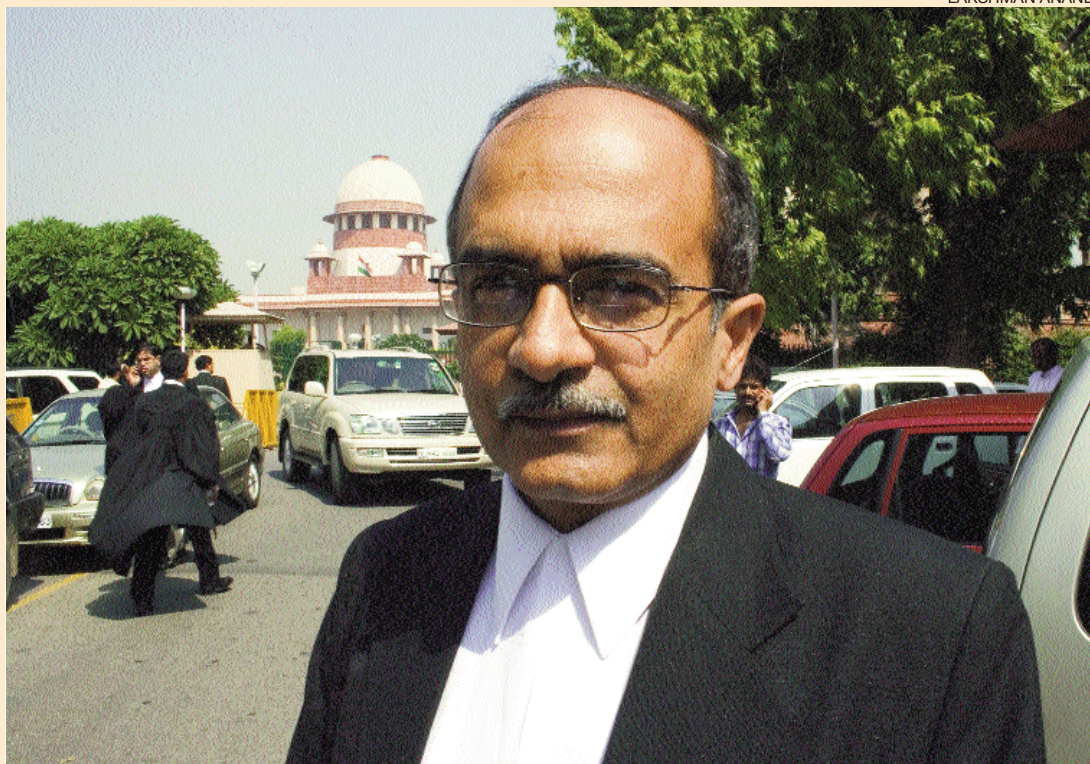
"The judiciary has remained a very opaque institution partly because of the fear of contempt, says Bhushan. "People don't talk about, don't write about the judiciary, at least they don't right about it freely because of this fear of contempt."

Bhushan points out that this is a law which is colonial in its origins. "It is not only



# judge the judges?

## *campaign gathers steam*



LAKSHMAN ANAND

Prashant Bhushan

colonial but, as has been pointed out by Fali Nariman in an article, it was recommended by a committee that it should be abolished for England but retained for a colony where there are parts of the population that need to be subjected to judicial terror. That is the origin of the law and it is shocking that it should continue to exist in this country."

Excerpts from an interview with **Prashant Bhushan:**

**Your campaign has raised many questions in the minds of ordinary people about the judiciary. What is the system of judicial accountability that you are looking at?**

We have said first of all scandalising the court or lowering the authority of the court must be deleted from the definition of contempt. We must revert to the American standard which is clear and present danger to administration of justice.

Secondly, we have said that we need to have an independent national judicial commission which will be independent of the judiciary and not an in-house body of the judiciary. It will be a constitutional body that can act independent of Parliament, the government and the judiciary. It should be like the Election Commission. It should have the power to investigate complaints against judges and take whatever action it deems fit, including the removal of judges.

We have proposed the model for that, but unfortunately the judiciary wants it to be an in-house body if at all. They feel that there is no need for any body. They claim to have set up some informal in-house procedure but which they hardly ever activate. Except in cases where there is a public scandal. Only then do they activate the in-house mechanism. You see they say you should not publicise even if you have evidence to show that the judge has committed serious misconduct. You should send it to the Chief Justice. He will

constitute an in-house committee because we should not publicise charges against judges.

What our experience has shown is that unless you publicise the charge and it becomes a public scandal, they will never investigate it, they will never activate their in-house body. They will just push the charges under the carpet. So it is a Catch 22 situation: if you publicise we will haul you up for contempt, if you don't publicise we will push it under the carpet. Which means effectively you can't do anything against corrupt judges even if you have evidence.

**How many times has there been an internal assessment of a judge?**

Very few, I think just two or three cases. And this was when it had become a scandal. For instance, some judge in Rajasthan who was reported by the media to have asked for women and so on...

**So the instances are few and far between. Now in the case of the supra body that you have proposed, who would be appointed to it and how?**

It should be a five-member body headed by a chairman selected by all the judges of the Supreme Court. Another member should be selected by all the Chief Justices of the high courts, a third member should be selected by the Cabinet, a fourth member by a committee of the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and the Speaker and a fifth member by a committee of the chairman of the human rights commissions, the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Chief Central Vigilance Commissioner.

Once selected, the members of the body will enjoy a tenure of five years during which they will not be subject to anybody's control.

**Has this been discussed at any serious level, has it**

been formally rejected...

The judiciary has said that if at all there is such a body it must be an in-house body. It must consist only of judges. There must not be any outsider because that will compromise the independence of the judiciary. They hold that independence of the judiciary means lack of any external accountability, which is absurd to my mind.

**How are judges held accountable in other societies?**

In England they have a judicial complaints commission and an ombudsman to examine complaints against the judicial complaints commission. In America too they have some such system which varies from state to state. But nowhere in the world does the judiciary have such total lack of accountability as in India.

**Is the judiciary's unwillingness to be held accountable, as you see it, a recent phenomenon or has it been a consistent trend?**

Over the years, as the reputation of the political class has fallen in our society, the judiciary has moved in to occupy that space. They have gradually seized power from the executive and the legislature. I'm not saying that this is unjustified. After all if the executive and legislature don't act, then the judiciary must step in to protect the fundamental rights of the people.

But this insulating themselves from all accountability, even from registering of FIRs and so on -- this is something that has happened only over the past 15 years as the power of the judiciary has grown. They have felt emboldened to insulate themselves further and further. Even under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. This is in fact nothing short of a public scandal. After having given resounding judgments that RTI is a fundamental right and even political candidates are obliged to disclose their assets and antecedents, the judges have sought to box themselves out. They have been emboldened to do that because they feel they are now a law unto themselves and nobody can get them.

**Is the judiciary therefore double-faced. After all it is the same judiciary that has taken upon itself to play an activist role in the public interest.**

It is not the question of a double face. Everyone would like to avoid accountability. The judiciary is no exception.

**So this whole question of judicial accountability will have to rest with the politicians. It will have to come as part of a political agenda.**

What we have seen is that politicians don't mind corruption in the judiciary so long as it doesn't hurt them. They have found that a corrupt judiciary doesn't hurt them. In fact it helps them. The more corrupt the judiciary is the less likely it is to hold politicians to account. The politicians are very happy with a corrupt judiciary so long as the corrupt judiciary doesn't trouble them too much.

None of them have a real stake in cleansing the system. The real stake is with the common people who are the consumers of justice. It is the common people who are suffering because of this corrupt, unaccountable and now elitist and anti-poor system. So unless the consumers of justice come together, put up a strong campaign and win public opinion on this issue, nothing is going to happen. Until politicians see this becoming a political issue they are not going to make any change in this system.

That is why we have set up this campaign. The whole objective of this campaign is to get common people, the consumers of justice involved.



# Angry DU students ask for action

**Shailey Hingorani**  
New Delhi

ON 16 September, a 19-year-old student from the northeast crossed the street from her college, the Indraprastha College for Women (IP) in Delhi University, to buy medicines from a pharmacy. She was molested, verbally and physically, by a group of five young men who had congregated with another 600 to appear for an examination for recruitment of policemen and lower division clerks. The girl bore scratch marks on her neck.

Two girl students, travelling in a rickshaw, were also attacked by these police hopefuls on the same day. Seven boys tried to pull out the girls from the rickshaw and when they weren't successful, tried to board the moving vehicle themselves.

Street sexual violence on the campus is a daily reality. For years girls have requested better safety measures, but nobody has cared. Each girl is forced to fend for herself. Without any fear of the law, the campus has become a happy hunting ground for lascivious men with no decency.

But these two incidents of street sexual violence finally sparked outrage. The girls decided they had had enough. In a remarkable show of strength, over 500 students, from different Delhi University Colleges, like IP College, Hindu, St. Stephen's, Ramjas and Kirorimal led protests, demanding action against the culprits and a safer campus.

"I decided to go to the protest meetings because it could have easily been me in that situation. If I don't support the girls today who will stand up to support me tomorrow?" said a 20-year-old student from IP College.

"We should put an end to this harassment. All of us need to come together to show that we have had enough. And this sense of anger motivated me and my friends to participate," said another student.

The three girls who were molested, supported by their friends and teachers, decided to report these criminal incidents to the police. They met the Station House Officer (SHO) of the Mukherjee Nagar Police Station. The students say despite their insistence the SHO and two head constables of the police station didn't register FIRs against the culprits and instead asked uncomfortable questions.

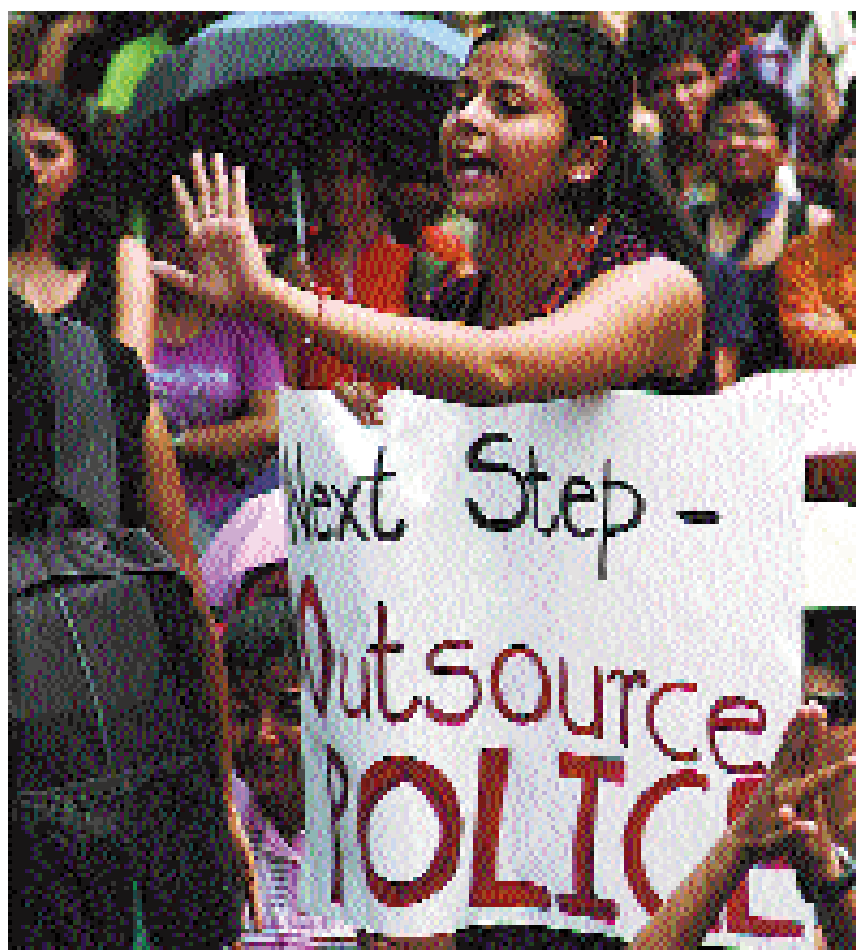
"We were assured by the SHO that such an incident wouldn't happen again, but his assurance sounded hollow and that's when we decided to march to the Vice-Chancellor, Deepak Pental's Office," said a student of IP College. The students met the Joint Commissioner of Police (Northern Region) PR Meena, to make sure that their demands were not just locked away into some dusty file.

The National Commission of Women (NCW) took note. It organised an emergency meeting with the Police Commissioner Y S Dadwal, Delhi University Vice-Chancellor Deepak Pental and Proctor Gurmeet Singh. The meeting discussed safety

measures and the insensitivity shown by the constables at the Mukherjee Nagar Police Station. The two FIRs were registered only on the insistence of the NCW.

The police then asked the victims to help them identify the culprits. How could the girls pick out the men from a sea of faces? The girls demanded nullification of the 16 September exam instead.

"The police machinery is hardly effective against such harassment. We need to put pressure on the police and the Delhi government to pull up their socks and get their act together. We needed to send a strict message to them and we did that by collecting in hordes for the protest," said Richa of IP College.



# Rizwanur's death gives Kolkata

**Shuktara Lal**  
Kolkata

RIZWANUR Rehman, a young graphic designer, died a lonely and anonymous death on the railway tracks outside Kolkata, but he is being remembered all over West Bengal as a victim of police brutality and an example of what can happen when powerful people want to have their way.

Rizwanur had married Priyanka Todi, daughter of Ashok Todi, a rich businessman who owns the Rs 200 crore hosiery company, Lux Cozi.

Records show that Rizwanur and his family were harassed by the police after the marriage. He had feared for his life, wasn't given protection and was finally found dead.

The Kolkata Police Commissioner and some other senior officers have been transferred. But the Left Front government acted only after public protests refused to die down. A murder charge against Todi was registered after the CBI took over the case.

It is the outrage expressed by Kolkatans that has made a difference. A candlelight vigil held by citizens in front of St. Xavier's College has been a moving tribute to Rizwanur and a cry for justice. The Association for Protection of Democratic Rights



SHUKTARA LAL



DRIK INDIA

Left: A memorial for Rizwanur. And, above, his mother

**If two consenting adults wish to marry, even if they are from different social and economic backgrounds, why should they be harassed by those in powerful positions?**





metro stations for easy identification.

Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit assured students that 500 women constables would be deployed on campus in addition to police personnel already present.

Sunita Thakur, Senior Program Coordinator, Jagori, who was part of a team which conducted the Safe Delhi campaign across areas in the Capital, said, "If we need to make the city safe for women we need to improve urban infrastructure, including street lighting, signage, pavements, parks and services like helplines, medical centres and counselling facilities."

But finally none of this will work if the police are remiss. Harassment of women will end when tough action is taken quickly.



Students told *Civil Society* that their resolve to protest grew stronger when some policemen went to IP College and asked the girl students not to wear 'provocative dresses' to avoid molestation and harassment.

"Ethnicity had no role to play in this. The girl student was attacked because she was a woman, not because she was from the northeast, not because of her attire, not because she was 20-years-old," said Gauri of Delhi University.

Students have demanded deployment of plain-clothes policewomen, stricter punishment for policemen who refuse to register FIRs and an ID card for all workers deployed at the neighbouring

## its voice

(APDR), held a meeting which drew large crowds.

Rizwanur's death has resulted in some soul searching among human rights activists in Kolkata. If two consenting adults wish to marry, even if they are from different social and economic backgrounds, why should they be harassed by those in powerful positions? And, more importantly, what can be done to save them when their lives are in danger?

Such harassment, say activists, is not new. "Rizwanur and Priyanka's case is by no means unprecedented," says Sujato Bhadra, secretary of APDR, an organisation Rizwanur had appealed to for help. "We have received several similar complaints from other couples before."

Rajashri Dasgupta, a freelance writer and human rights activist who is campaigning for justice for Rizwanur and his family, says, "There are no easy answers. We need to examine why marital choices made by two consenting adults can be so threatening for others. Who evolves the socio-economic norms that determine which two individuals can marry each other? These issues need to be unpacked."

After Rizwanur's death, junior police officials contacted APDR disclosing that they faced harassment from senior officials when they try to deliver

justice. Bhadra notes: "There is a law in Europe that declares that if a junior police official is harassed by a senior official, the latter can be removed from his post. The junior official cannot be reprimanded for not following unjust orders given by his superior. Something similar should be implemented here to keep abuse of power in our police force in check."

Rizwanur's death reveals the deep nexus between political parties, wealthy businessmen and the police. "The law decrees that the police cannot be manipulated by those wielding political power. They must function as an independent force. But what is the point of having such a law if it is not practised? There is evidence against Ashok Todi. Why has he not, then, been arrested?"

Apart from devising strategies to sensitise police personnel, attempts are being made to tackle hostility to such marriages by families and society. Bhadra points to the importance of counselling families. Rajashri Dasgupta says there are plans to conduct workshops in schools on social norms that influence opinions regarding 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' marriages.

Women's groups say well-off, educated women are prevented from deciding whom they can marry. "We are hoping to convene a women's studies seminar to evaluate women's autonomy," says Sutapa Neogi of Sachetana, a feminist organisation.

The big question now is whether the new consciousness that Rizwanur's death has brought will result in real action.

## Sasakawa Foundation gets going

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

PEOPLE who get cured of leprosy never go back to their old life. The disease stigmatises them and makes them untouchables. The Sasakawa India Leprosy Foundation (SILF), launched formally last month, will help 11 million Indians cured of leprosy to reunite with society by rehabilitating them, socially and economically.

"Too many people affected by leprosy are reduced to begging only because they are forced to become social outcasts," said Yohei Sasakawa, chairperson of SILF and head of the Nippon Foundation.

"Our aim is to reintegrate them by building awareness about the disease and by providing



Yohei Sasakawa (right) and APJ Abdul Kalam

income-generation options."

Indian companies are teaming up with SILF to set up vocational training units, provide employment opportunities and infuse funds for awareness campaigns. The Nippon Foundation is generously contributing \$10 million for this purpose.

India has 670 exclusive self-settled colonies of leprosy affected and cured persons. SILF will work closely with NGOs to create self-help groups for people affected by leprosy. The Foundation will help cured people gain access to education, vocational training, micro finance and marketing.

Most NGOs and charitable organisations work only on medical rehabilitation. But leprosy is a social not a medical problem. Misinformation about the disease has to be countered with the truth.

SILF was formally launched by former President of India Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. Yohei Sasakawa and Tarun Das, chairperson, SILF Board of Trustees, were also present. Yohei Sasakawa is well known for his relentless campaign for victims of leprosy. He was recently honoured with the International Gandhi Award.

For details contact: Vineeta Shanker at 011- 42403160  
Website: [www.silf.in](http://www.silf.in)



# CHILDREN WHO BUILD INDIA



Nine-year-old Rajesh (name changed) unloading bricks from a kiln near Meerut. The migrant worker involves his whole family because production time is limited and the more bricks they make, the more money they get.



A nine-year-old boy flying a kite near the brick kiln's chimney. He is taking a break from his arduous work in a brick kiln near Meerut. There are no playgrounds and children play in hazard prone areas without any adult supervision.

Migrant workers putting bricks inside the brick kiln at the beginning of the brick making season near Bhopal.



Eleven-year-old girl Babita (name changed) takes care of her brother as her mother and father toil at a brick kiln near Meerut. Many children work with their parents at the kilns, while others, some as young as eight or nine, look after infant siblings.

Eight-year-old Nafis loads bricks into trucks.



A child prepares food in the evening for his family which works in the brick kiln. Migrant workers get low priority from state authorities. They have virtually no support from local people who see them as outsiders.

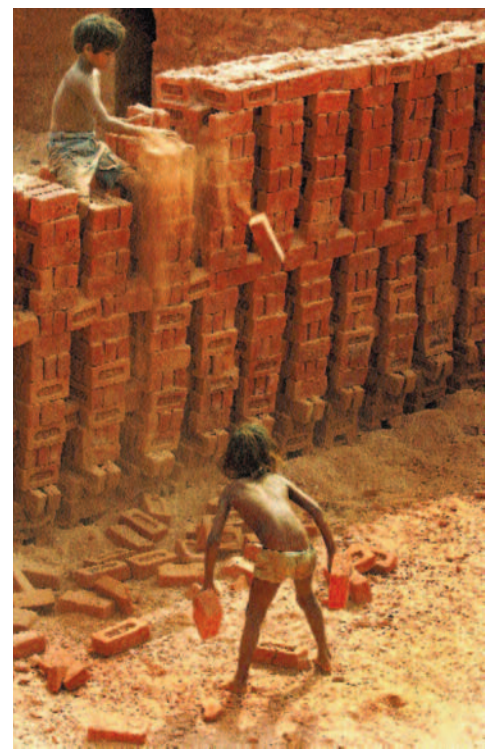


Fourteen-year-old Rekha migrated from a village near eastern Uttar Pradesh to work at the brick kiln. She collects mud to make bricks. The shaping of bricks from clay is done mostly by women and children.



Eleven-year-old Sonu (name changed) collects mud to make bricks for a brick kiln near Meerut.

Migrant children unload bricks from the kiln.





# BRICK BY BRICK



Nafiz smiles since a burst of rain delayed work at the brick kiln.



Nooran is just one and a half year's old. Her mother has coated her face with wet mud to protect her tender skin from the searing heat.



Children return to their huts after the day's work is over. Living conditions are miserable.



Eight-year-old Nafiz stands on coal with his calloused feet as he takes a break from his grueling work at the brick kiln. There are no medical facilities for him or his family.



Twelve-year-old Sanjay takes a little rest at night in a brick kiln near Meerut. The children have no access to education, nor can their parents afford it.



Fourteen-year-old Rekha with her brother Sanju prepare bricks at a brick kiln near Meerut.

## Dark lives of migrant labour

What happens to children when their families trudge to a sooty brick kiln for work? Instead of drawing pictures, small hands shape bricks. Little feet get calloused in stone and mud. Babies are smeared with clay to protect tender skin from scorching heat. Children as young as eight or nine look after tinier siblings, cook and clean.

Harish Tyagi's pictures unearth the dark lives of children and their parents as they slave in the brick kilns of Meerut district in western Uttar Pradesh. Tyagi got a fellowship from the National Foundation for India (NFI), New Delhi, to chronicle distress migration and its effects on children. He travelled to Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan with his camera on his back.

India's brick industry is the second largest in the world after China. Drive around any northern state, you will see looming brick kilns with spirals of smoke. The people who make bricks are migrant labour from impoverished regions in Bihar, Orissa and western Uttar Pradesh.

The brick kiln owner gives them an advance for which he charges no interest. Migrant workers see this as an advantage since the money can be used for an emergency, a wedding, a piece of land or to access healthcare. Accounts are settled after the brick making season, which lasts for eight to seven months, is over. Since there is no written agreement and no union to protect workers, brick kiln owners pay what they like. With four to five months of unemployment staring them in the face, workers opt for making bricks.

About half are women and many children. They have no social security and very little legislation to protect them. But they work at brick kilns since they cannot find better jobs. Work begins around October. The entire family pitches in since production time is short and the more bricks they make, the more money they get.

Children work four to six hours. The shaping of bricks from clay is done by them and by women mostly. Drying and pre-firing is done by adults. Final firing, loading and unloading of bricks is handled by adults and children.

Families live in ramshackle barracks. There are no drinking water, sanitation or health facilities. Children are exposed to waterborne diseases, mosquitoes and snakes. They suffer from burns, skin diseases, respiratory problems and eye and ear ailments.

To take pictures, Tyagi had to overcome suspicion. Brick kiln owners did not want him around. Employing children under 14 is banned under law and kiln owners deny they have child workers.

Harish Tyagi works with the European Press Agency in New Delhi. Every now and then he steps away from his job to uncover India's underbelly.

E-mail: tyagiharish@gmail.com



# Lepchas grieve for their Dzongu

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

**K**HANGCHENDZONGA, the world's highest national park, lies in north Sikkim. Along its periphery is the Dzongu reserve, the sacred homeland of the Lepcha community. The park, of course, is famous for its ecological splendour. Dzongu too has been preserved by the Lepchas for centuries. Snowy peaks, glacial lakes, dense forests and rare animals have lured admiring tourists here.

Now a spate of dams on the Teesta river will cut through Dzongu. And the Lepcha community is naturally furious. "Dzongu is our Mecca, our Ayodhya," explains Pemzang Tenzing of the Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT). "Our community will die out if this region is harmed."

On June 20, two ACT activists went on a 63-day hunger-strike in Gangtok to protest dam construction on the Teesta and Rangit. Hunger strikes continue but aren't making a dent. Then two ACT representatives, Pemzang Tenzing, a civil engineer, and Dawa Lepcha, a documentary film maker, journeyed to Delhi to ask activists in the capital for help. A meeting was arranged at the Indian Social Institute where Pemzang and Dawa presented their case with facts, figures and emotion.

On a 175 km stretch of the Teesta, 25 hydro projects are to come up with a total generation capacity of 4,678 MW. The Sikkim government has worked out agreements with companies in the private and public sector. Some are joint venture projects where the state government's equity is 26 per cent. Pemzang wonders how dams on the hilly river's steep incline from 5,000 m to 300 m will survive.

The electricity is for energy starved India. As oil prices rise and the nuclear deal with the US is in limbo, the government will pin its hopes on hydro power. Sikkim needs money and it has water.

In Dzongu, a region of around 500 sq km, the 280 MW Panan hydroelectric project is coming up. "We are saying don't build these seven projects inside Dzongu. The total generation capacity will come down to around 3,000 MW," says Tenzing. "Scaling down the project will not cause any loss to the government."

It will also bring peace. Dzongu is the spiritual lifeline of the Lepchas. Priests and priestesses begin prayers by invoking this region. Namthar, the holy book of the Lepchas, is engraved on a cliff in Dzongu.



A view of the Teesta in full flow



Dawa Lepcha (left) and Pemzang Tenzing

Mt Khangdendzonga, the third highest mountain in the world, is revered as the abode of the Lepcha diety, Dzo-nga. Each Lepcha clan has a mountain in the Himalayas (Chyu) from where it originated, a lake (Da) and a path (Lep).

All are invoked at birth, marriage and death ceremonies. The Lepchas believe after they die their

souls will return to their mountain, lake and path through Dzongu. The Lep is the entrance to a mountain or a lake.

Monks too are sympathetic to the agitation. "Some of these hydel projects will destroy Dzongu, the heart of our sacred land... It is the responsibility of all monks of Sikkim to stop everyone who is ignorant from doing such harmful activities," said senior monk, Sonam Paljor Denjongpa of the Chorten Gonpa Deorali, Gangtok. In fact, the Rathongchu project in west Sikkim had to be abandoned when lamas protested.

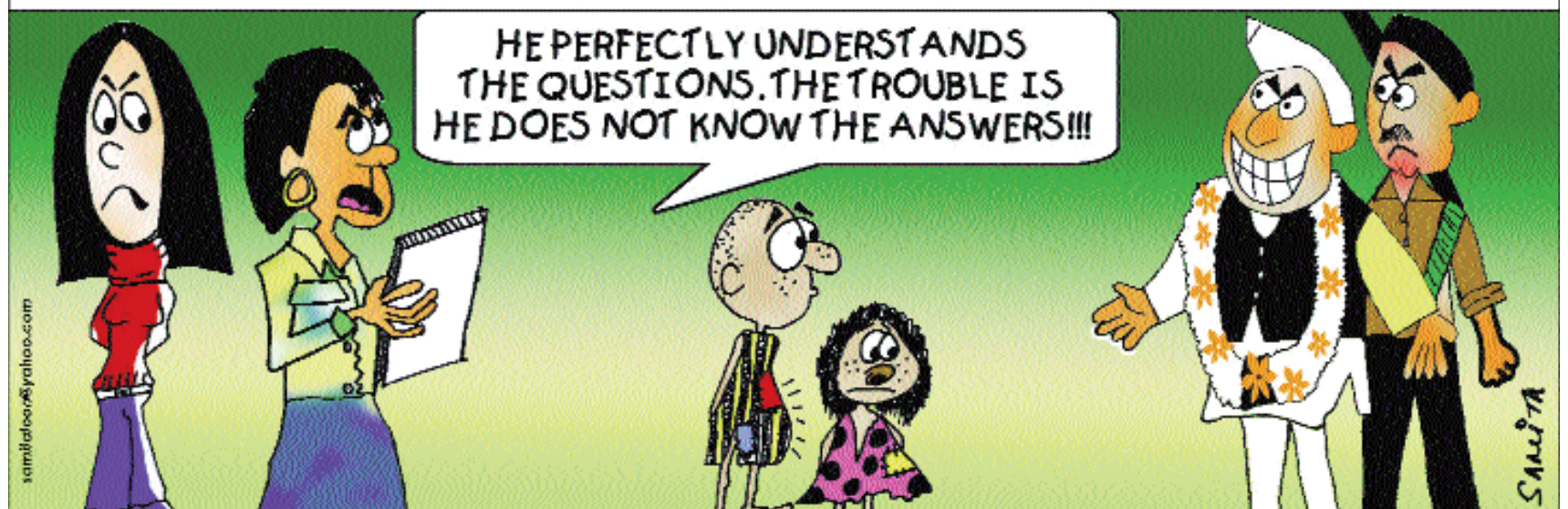
Around 7,000 Lepchas live in Dzongu on the right bank of the Teesta. Altogether, says Tenzing, there are 40,000 Lepchas in Sikkim who are deeply concerned.

"When Sikkim was ruled by the Chogyal, Dzongru was a protected region," he says. "It was the Queen's quarter and entry by outsiders was

*(Continued on next page)*

## Samita's World

by Samita Rathor





# Cool Kashmir gets warmer

Jehangir Rashid  
Srinagar

CHANGING weather patterns are likely to decrease agricultural production in Jammu and Kashmir, says a report published by Action Aid International on climate change and its impact in the state. Temperatures, on an average, have increased by 1.45 degree Celsius in Kashmir and by 2.32 degree Celsius in Jammu.

The report says that food security for more than four million people living in the Karewa region of Budgam district and in Uri, Gurez, Karnah, Drass, Ladakh and Doda is under threat.

Early and fast melting of glaciers in the Pir Panchal mountain range have severely affected water availability in the last one and half decades, according to the report.

Fluctuating temperatures and rainfall variations are leading to decreased agricultural output in these areas. Certain crops have either completely failed or are being replaced by low water fodder. Saffron production, paddy and maize have been hit.

Quoting the then Director of Agriculture, Ghulam Hyder Bhatt, the report says that if temperature fluctuations continue, the overall yield of paddy, which is the main crop of the Valley, may fall by 15 to 30 per cent since paddy seedlings will not get enough time to mature.

The shift from paddy to high yielding cash crops and fruits has yielded better economic returns in the Karewa areas of Kupwara, Baramulla, Budgam and Pulwama. But if new cash crops fail it would mean loss of both rice, a food crop, and loss of income from the newly adopted cash crops.

Quoting information provided by the Directorate of Agriculture the report says that in 1980-81 the Kashmir Valley had a food deficit of 23 per cent for a total population of 33 lakhs while in 2005-06 the food deficit has reached 40 per cent for a population of 60 lakhs. Vegetable production has decreased by 30 percent and oilseed output by 69 percent.

The report recommends that the government evolve a food security monitoring mechanism. It should seek the cooperation of NGOs and draw plans for food security.

The state government should take urgent steps to minimise the emission of greenhouse gases, locally, said Arjimand Hussain Talib, Project Manager, Action Aid. He said most of these gases get trapped in the Valley since it is surrounded by high mountains on all sides.

Stringent laws need to be implemented for checking emissions from private vehicles and industrial units and from government and military establishments. Emissions from charcoal based heating systems, used in winter, must be monitored.

Hundreds of heavy military vehicles move in convoys throughout Kashmir everyday, producing a high level of greenhouse gases. These vehicles are outside the purview of the state's pollution control board. The government must bring all non-civilian vehicles within the ambit of state pollution laws since military vehicles move through the most ecologically sensitive areas of Kashmir.

According to the Indian Meteorological Department temperatures are increasing in Jammu and the Kashmir Valley by 0.05 degree Celsius.

According to the recently released report by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change

(IPCC), global temperatures are likely to rise by 1.1 degree Celsius to 6.4 degree Celsius by 2100.

This means that the plains of Kashmir would no longer receive snow. Snowfall in the upper reaches will not be able to feed rivers through the year and this will affect the livelihood of communities.

The report said that western disturbances over Kashmir will become unpredictable, due to global factors. Distribution and quantity of rainfall will change too. The report says that heat-trapping gases which have reduced snowfall in Khrew-Pampore and Anantnag could spill over to other areas resulting in less or no snow in the plains in the coming two decades.

The report pointed out that hundreds of springs spread across Kashmir have either dried up or are in the process of drying up. Groundwater levels in most plains do not seem to have been adversely affected. But in Karewas and the upper areas groundwater levels have reduced by one-third.

The time period for snowfall has undergone a sea change with December and January receiving scant or no snow while February and March witness heavy snowfall. Although occasionally there are spells of heavy snowfall, the inability of snow to freeze and develop into hard longer-lasting crystals owing to higher temperatures has resulted in faster meltdown. The report says in the Kalaroos area in Kupwara district only three feet of snowfall was recorded as compared to 10 feet in the past.

The same trend has been witnessed in Manzgam and Wader areas of the same district.

The report observes that the amount of rainfall received in December, January and February has increased in comparison to the past.

(Continued from previous page)

restricted."

In 1975, when Sikkim merged with India, this north district was protected by the Chogyal's Proclamation of 3069 which inhibited the settlement of non-indigenous people. Under the Indian Constitution (Article 371 F), it was agreed that old laws would hold. Dzongu, including Toong, Lachen and Lachung are by law restricted areas to safeguard tribal inhabitants, explains Dawa.

So far the Lepcha community has been living peacefully. "We have no murders, rape or dacoity," says Tenzing. "The influx of labour will change that and bring a flood of disease."

Invariably, infrastructure projects have shown indifference to cultural sensitivities. The Border Roads Organisation and the army inundated the area with labour to build roads and took away 40 per cent of cultivable land from people in Lachen, Lachung and Chungthang region, says Tenzing.

Then names of revered lakes, ridges and even villages were summarily changed. The sacred Guru Dongmar Lake was rechristened the Guru Nanak Jheel. The holy stone complex (Leydo) at Chungthang was encroached upon and overnight it became Changthang. The history of Sikkim's patron saint Guru Padamsambhava was blithely attributed to Guru Nanak.

Looking at the ham handed way in which companies are carrying out Stage V of the dam project at Dikchu makes the Lepchas even more fearful. "Most of these private companies don't have any experience of dam building," says Tenzing.

Dam building has been divided into stages. Stages 1 to IV is in north Sikkim, Stage V in north and east districts and Stage VI is downstream in the

east and south districts.

Run of the river projects are generally given a clean chit since displacement and submergence is minimal. But these fragile hills now reverberate with the sound of dynamite. Tunnels have to be burrowed to divert river water for long stretches.

"The Teesta will become an underground river. Tunnels will reduce the flow of water. Already, tunnelling for Stage V has cracked homes, dried up

*Names of revered lakes, ridges and villages were changed. The sacred Guru Dongmar Lake was rechristened the Guru Nanak Jheel.*

water and caused landslides," explains a paper written by ACT.

Tenzing says Lepchas in Dzongu will find it difficult to farm. Tunnelling will harm their homes. Their income and mobility will decline.

Then the companies, NHPC, JPLL and Gammon India Ltd, are dumping debris in the river and forests sully the countryside and reducing the river's carrying capacity. The CEC has been alerted to this destruction. Even the chief secretary, Sikkim government, agrees this is happening, according to ACT members. Studies to gauge the carrying capac-

ity of the Teesta Basin are incomplete yet Teesta V was cleared, says Tenzing.

Amazingly, the Panan project has been granted clearance though it is close to the Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve. The Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) for Stage III of the project does not even mention the park, though it is one km from the hydro project and catchment area treatment will have to be done inside. Two important areas for birds are located here. ACT has challenged the EIAs for Stage III and Panan before the Central Empowered Committee.

Information on glaciers and the impact of climate change are critical to gauge the long term viability of dams in north Sikkim. The Teesta river originates from the Zemu glacier and the Rangit river from the Rathing glacier. The Zemu glacier has been retreating eight meters every year. The Kangchenjau glacier has been behaving differently. There is the risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF).

Dams and infrastructure projects should be minutely designed with the people and be open to alterations to suit local sensitivities.

But public hearings which are meant to take into account local concerns were reduced to a farce. Hearings for the Teesta V project were held in Gangtok, far from the dam site. Inputs by activists were ignored. In June 2006 the public hearing for the Teesta III project became a platform to make political speeches. The people who opposed the dams were told they were 'anti-national, anti-social elements' by the chairperson of the State Pollution Control Board.

"We are a peaceful, docile people," says Dawa, a frown creasing his face. "We did defend our sacred land in the past and we will do it again."



# India is an easy hotspot

**Amita Joseph**  
New Delhi

**H**UMAN trafficking is a cruel form of slavery which law enforcement and other agencies have been fighting for years. It is women and children who are exploited. Now the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has launched a campaign called the UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) to achieve real results.

It has recently set up Integrated Anti-Human Trafficking Units (IAHTUs) in Andhra Pradesh, Goa, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Bihar. The IAHTUs consist of police, NGOs and local people who rescue victims, take care of them and ensure the criminals are sent to jail.

The IAHTUs have conducted 96 rescue operations with 497 anti-human trafficking cases registered and two traffickers convicted. This, the UNODC says, represents a dramatic increase.

The IAHTU in Andhra Pradesh rounded up a sex trafficking network stretching to Bangalore. Prajwala, an NGO, rehabilitated the victims. Eight dubious places were closed down in Andhra and one in Goa by the IAHTU.

A UNODC workshop in Delhi in October discussed strategies on stepping up the campaign.

*An interview with Gary Lewis, Representative of the UNODC, on its new initiatives.*

## What is the extent of the problem in India?

There are no definitive figures about the number of victims, as most are identified as persons who have violated migration, labour and prostitution laws. Lack of awareness makes India an easy hotspot for vulnerable victims to be lured by the traffickers. Trafficking from neighbouring countries to India, accounts for 10 per cent of coerced migration. Approximately 2.17 per cent come from Bangladesh and 2.6 per cent from Nepal. However, most trafficking takes place within India itself. In addition, there are not enough laws to protect this vulnerable section. Not enough is done.

## Is UNODC able to bring human trafficking on a par with drugs?

UNODC historically has mainly been a drug control agency, giving almost 65 per cent of its attention to the prevention of drug abuse and reduction of drug

supply. In India, though, we are concentrating equally on drug related crime as well as other crimes ranging from human trafficking to corruption and organised crime. Our priority is to save lives and work with the government, NGOs, law enforcement agencies and corporate sector.

## IN FOCUS



Gary Lewis

## How is UNODC providing aid to victims?

The UNODC undertakes prevention and awareness raising activities to educate and provide information to the victims. UNODC helps NGOs provide assistance to victims and carries out prevention campaigns through TV, radio spots, posters and similar material. Though the victims have to be prepared to face the media, the harsh public interrogation makes it all the more difficult for the victims.

## What is UNODC's priority on stemming human trafficking?

Our priority is to create awareness on the issue in India and provide knowledge and educational resources to the victims of this crime. More importantly we work to get the government, NGOs, CBO's, law enforcement agencies, celebrities, the glitterati and companies to work together towards building change. The focus is to work with the justice department to be part of the solution and not the problem. On the issue of licensing and workers rights UNODC is neutral.

# Carpet weavers turn to labour

**Jehangir Rashid**  
Srinagar

**O**VER the years many carpet weavers in Kashmir have given up their profession and become labourers instead. The reason is that labourers earn more. A carpet weaver is paid Rs 100 per day while a construction worker gets between Rs 140 to Rs 150 per day.

The problem becomes worse in summer when construction is in full swing. In winter, the carpet weavers revert to weaving. But since they are paid a paltry sum, they are not very enthusiastic about the work.

"Carpet weaving fetches me Rs 3,000 a month. When I take up the job of a labourer my monthly income is between Rs 4,500 to Rs 5,000," says Javed Ahmad, a weaver who has become a labourer.

"I am forced to weave carpets in winter since construction is at a low then," he says

Since weaving of carpets is arduous, the people associated with it want better treatment. They say if they are paid higher wages they would continue to do carpet weaving through the year.

Carpet weavers believe they have been exploited by one and all, including the government. They say if the government and society accepts that they are skilled artisans, then why are they paid less money?

"Carpet weaving is not easy. The script is so fine that the weaver has to shut one eye to get an idea on how to proceed. Once that happens it is quite natural that their vision gets affected, which is a serious health problem," says Ali Mohammad, who works as an ophthalmic assistant at a clinic in the city.

Although a computerised script has been introduced, it does not make carpet weaving any easier. The script is not that bold, he explains.

Accepting that the wages being paid to carpet weavers are less as compared to other professions, leading businessman and former president, Kashmir Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI), Rauf A Punjabi said that production of carpets falls in summer.

The presence of middlemen is a big problem. The middleman is in constant touch with carpet weavers and exporters but he never facilitates meetings between the two.

The middleman pays the weavers a meagre amount and sells the carpets at a good rate to the exporter, thereby earning a huge profit for himself.

In some villages in Kashmir, girls and women also weave carpets. But as they have to do household work they are not able to devote more attention to weaving carpets. In most cases they are paid less than their male counterparts.





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# Realising India's Unlimited Potential

## Enhancing Education



Quality education is the foundation stone for a promising tomorrow. Today, technology and digital literacy are fuelling the emerging knowledge economy. For India's success we need to ensure that both are accessible to a majority of Indians. Microsoft is committed to bridging the digital divide and helping young India realize its full potential.

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Microsoft's Project Shiksha was launched with the clear objective of enhancing IT usage in classroom teaching. Designed especially for underserved communities, Project Shiksha is run in partnership with state governments for government schools. Project Shiksha has already trained over 1,80,000 teachers through ten IT academies. Therefore, impacting over 8 million school students. Further, an innovative Teachers Leadership Award (TLA) has been instituted in order to recognise and reward innovative work across government schools. Since its institution in 2004, several teachers from government schools have been selected after a nationwide contest and sent to the regional teachers' conference in APAC & WW ILTAS to share experiences and learning. With such initiatives in place, Microsoft is truly committed to helping provide high-quality education through dynamic, user-focused resources that increase access to learning and empower teachers to impart knowledge better.

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# BRIDGES FOR EVERYONE

**Girish Bharadwaj helps 200,000 villagers escape isolation**

**Shree Padre**  
*Sullia (Karnataka)*

EVER since they can remember, most of the villagers of Delampady in Kerala's Kasaragod district have lived a dual existence: as part of the mainland for six months and as a fragile and worried river island for the rest of the year when the surging waters of the Payaswini cut them off during the monsoon.

Now, a simple and sturdy suspension foot bridge has put an end to such

uncertainty. Erected in September, it spans 105 metres and makes it easy for villagers to go to work and school, transfer provisions or get a sick person to hospital.

Constructed in four months, the bridge has cost just Rs 21.5 lakhs. Villagers can't believe that it has taken so little to end five decades of isolation.

The villagers' hero today is Girish Bhardawaj, 57, a mechanical engineer from Sullia, in the Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka.

Girish is not new to such adulation. He has been building bridges for the past 18 years. There are 66 that he has to his credit. The bridges are mostly in



**Girish camps at his sites and works with local people. But more than the hands-on engineering, it is the spirit that matters. Each bridge is an expression of bonding. "We bridge places, people and hearts," says Girish.**



Photographs by YA/JNA

Karnataka and Kerala, but there are a few in some other southern states as well.

In his career as a grassroots engineer, Girish has helped at least 200,000 hapless villagers cross rivers safely. For them he is a saviour.

In the initial years, local civic bodies used to reject the idea of a suspension bridge. "It is only a temporary structure the military builds for an emergency," they would say dismissively. "The Army dismantles such bridges after their purpose is served."

Now, fully convinced, they call for tenders for hanging bridge construction. In Karnataka, only Girish builds them.

By seeing the benefits of this vital communication link, the message goes on spreading. There are now eight bridges across the Payaswini. Nine bridges have been erected over the Chandragiri, which the Payaswini joins. The bridge completed in September is the fourth in that panchayat area, which is plagued by communication hardships.

"This is the culmination of a long struggle," says MC Narayanan Nayar, one

of the villagers who will benefit from the new bridge at Delampady.

"The inner bank becomes an island for half the year. This has meant crossing the river in country boats and walking four kilometres to catch a bus. For bringing provisions, transporting patients and so on it is necessary to hire a jeep. One trip by jeep costs Rs 150, which is a steep price for us villagers. It also means doing 13 km on a circuitous road. My work demands that I have to cross this river daily twice. My bread is on the other side," says Purushoththama, a farmer.

Like Purushoththama, there are half a dozen other locals who have voluntarily worked on the suspension bridge because of the difference it will make to their lives.

Working with local people is an integral part of Girish's bridge-building. So Girish normally camps at the construction site with his 15-member crew, eating, sleeping and solving technical problems on the spot.

Being around facilitates close supervision. He can see for himself that technical specifications are being met. But even more than the hands-on engineering, it is the spirit that really matters. Each bridge is an expression of bonding. "We bridge the gaps between places, people and hearts," says Girish.

#### **His father's son**

Girish belongs to a farming family from Aramboor, near Sullia. He wanted to become an engineer because his father was one. However, Balekkala Krishna Bhat, his father, would call an engineering degree a 'begging bowl.' Having served the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) at various places, he was fed up with the system. He saw little point in his son being an engineer.

Girish's mother had to intervene to persuade his father to send him to an engineering college. "Though the college fees were Rs 600 a year and hostel fees Rs 90 a month, it was a lot of money for us," recalls Girish.

He studied mechanical engineering at P.E.S. College of Engineering in Mandya and got a first class. Girish's father wanted him to stay home and serve the local rural community. So, when Girish sought his blessings before going to Bangalore for a job interview, he remarked, "Go, enjoy Bangalore and come back. I will keep praying that you shouldn't get the job."

Girish went on trying. Jobs were difficult at that time. One day he had gone to the local lorry office with his father. An old pump-set was kept there. The agent said it was being sent to Puttur for repairs. While returning home, Girish's father said to him: "When you, an engineer, are here, why should our farmers have to send their pump-sets elsewhere for repair? You start a small workshop. Later on it will grow. Kirloskar too came up the same way."

For the youngster who was dreaming of a city job, this was a great disappointment. His father was asking a qualified engineer to perform the role of a mechanic. Girish recalls, "Yet on second thoughts, I bowed to my father's wishes and wore the blue dress of a mechanic." His small workshop in Sullia opened in 1975. Being the only workshop in the town, he was asked to do different types of jobs from machinery erection to general fabrication.

For all his aspirations of employment in a big city, Girish did not mind working with his hands. Indeed, with time he found that he really enjoyed it. He took up local assignments with great zest and did not shy away from manual work.

#### **The stepping stone**

In 1989 came an unexpected turning point. A Range Forest Officer approached him to build a small hanging bridge at Nisargadhama in Karnataka's Kodagu district.

Girish didn't have any knowledge about bridge construction. However, by seeing a similar bridge being erected, he carried out the work. "I didn't have any design, nor did I have calculations. Yet, the bridge continues to serve," he says laughing heartily. "But I never dreamt at that time that I would end up constructing bridges throughout my life like this."

Nevertheless, that is what destiny had decreed. A few years after the first bridge, villagers from his native Aramboor requested him to construct a bridge across the Payaswini. They would not take his pleas of lack of experience seriously because he had already put up a bridge. Girish had to yield. As it was his native village, he took only the cost of materials from the villagers.

When two days were left for the inauguration, a village elder, Kittanna Rai, admonished him, "Why have you put such a narrow rope? Won't people fall while crossing?"

"This question haunted me. When I closed my eyes, I would see the picture of a falling bridge," says Girish. He couldn't sleep that night.

At midnight, he rushed to his workshop to check whether anything had gone wrong with the calculation. No, Girish's calculations were correct. The rope was narrow, but the bridge was secure. Finally, the bridge was inaugurated with much fanfare.

After Aramboor, there was no turning back. He consulted many books. Prof. Nagaraj, principal of a local engineering college was of much help. Now, when it comes to making low-cost bridges in difficult terrain, there is perhaps no one in India equal to Girish. Yet, he takes each new bridge as seriously as he did the one at Aramboor.

At all the crucial stages of construction he invariably remains with his boys. In a whole day spent with him, we couldn't note any indication of tension, anger,





Girish and his team celebrate atop their new bridge (above). Workers building the suspension foot bridge (top right). A motorcycle going over the bridge (right).



complacency or arrogance in his interactions.

"See, it's a big responsibility. I can sit pretty at home leaving my boys here. That makes me tense. If I am here, I can caution them, ensure quality and safety both for the bridges and my boys."

Initially he was using big trees as pylons if they were available at the right place. Concrete pylons are now preferred because of their assured long life. Multi-strand steel ropes pass through rollers fixed above the pylon. These are tied to specially built anchors on both sides. Rods suspended from the rope at fixed intervals – from these suspenders has come the name suspension foot bridge (SFB) -- are connected to transoms. A lengthy floor element is later fitted connecting all these transoms.

"Before doing this, our boys cross the bridge by hanging on to these transoms like circus performers do," says Girish.

The ferro-cement decks inside a steel frame are finally fitted onto the floor element. On both sides of the bridge, PVC coated chain-link fencing is erected till waist level. If stiffening girders are used in place of chain-link fencing, it reduces the vibration considerably. Though slightly expensive, they uniformly distribute the load irrespective of the point where it is put.

Over the years, the bridges have seen many innovations. Earlier, in place of ferro-cement decks, wooden ones were being used. This time he has opted for a tapering circular column for the pylon. The earlier columns were rectangular. It required four columns for a pylon on one side. With interconnecting beams that design was costlier. Now there are only two columns. For the next bridge, he intends to have a single pylon. This was an idea he saw on the



Internet recently. Two ropes are hung from the same pylon. Girish has already incorporated this altogether new design for three proposals he has submitted.

In the present bridge he has provided extra holes on both edges of the transoms. This is for easier fitting of stiffening girders, if it is required sometime in future. If the holes are not there, to get them drilled in this village is expensive. Taking the future into account in the local community's interest is another aspect of Girish's mission.

Can two-wheelers pass over this bridge? Careful riding is okay, but some people suddenly apply brakes. This might cause problem for the bridge. Seeing this, now, an extra longitudinal beam is given to the floor element. So, motor-

## Bridge in Naxal terrain

**A**T Laknavaram, near Warangal in Andhra Pradesh, the state government is planning to promote tribal tourism to provide employment to local youth. Two hanging bridges are being built to connect two islands. This is a Naxalite area.

The Tribal Welfare Board arranged for Girish's team to stay 20 km away from the construction site. Stopping passing vehicles to extort money is a regular occurrence. Many local youth were hired to assist in bridge construction. The board provided a translator to help in communication. Building material has to be transported as head-load.

One day a tribal worker was surprised to see Girish eating with his boys. His name was Yadagiri and he was also the local sarpanch. "Forget about eating food together, Maliks here don't allow us anywhere near them," he told Girish. "Who is Malik?" asked Girish. "There is only One above us. These boys are like my children." Yadagiri said, "Would you treat me too like one of your own?"

"See, there is no serious problem. These misguided youth

aren't getting affection. If you shake hands with them, they feel they are in heaven," explained Girish.

Days later Girish told his local workers that they were losing valuable time since they had to travel to the camp with all their paraphernalia including a stove to cook.

"Why don't you stay here?" they said. They knew that the team had been advised not to because of being attacked by locals. "Who will disturb you? We will ensure you are safe," they promised.

Girish calls Yadagiri his younger brother or '*thammudu*' in Telugu. Now his vehicle is not stopped anywhere. Instead, local tribals grin and wave the '*Saar*' ahead. The first phase of work is being done. For the second and longer phase, with his younger brother's assurance, Girish is planning to stay on site. "See there is no bus, no basic amenities. These frustrated boys don't think beyond tomorrow. They don't have dreams. The circumstances seem to have robbed them of their dreams."



bikes and scooters can now happily pass over.

Cattle too can use the bridge, but the dung they leave behind has to be washed periodically. If not there will be corrosion. The bridge can bear a load of 400 kg per square metre. The present one being constructed at Kuntaru near Sullia is 1.2 metres wide. That means every running metre can take 480 kg.

### Bridging people

Girish's people-based approach attracts considerable local support. People are happy to give their labour free of cost. The Aramboor bridge was built entirely by people's participation.

"At Bavikere, near Kasaragod, people on either side of the river were not on good terms. But by the time our bridge was complete, their differences had melted," remembers Girish. "At the inauguration, one side brought benches for people to sit on and the other side brought homemade sweets."

At Baluvanthadka, in Kasaragod district of Kerala, where a 143 metre bridge was built eight years ago at a cost of Rs 15 lakh, almost everybody seems to know Girish intimately. "We don't have words to describe his contribution to connecting these cursed hamlets," says Raveendra Nayak stopping his motor-bike on the bridge.

Once the bridge was ready, 30 two-wheelers were bought by the villagers of Baluvanthadka. The bridge allows them to take their produce to the market, drop their children to school and so on. Earlier, on many occasions, villagers who had gone to Kasaragod, just 30 km away, had to spend the night away from home because boats wouldn't ply after 5.30 pm. A boatman would charge Rs 10 per person. The result was that only 10 or 15 people would venture out of the village on most days. Now, on an average, 200 people cross the bridge every day.

During its construction, despite the three-tier panchayats contributing to the bridge, there was a shortage of Rs 60,000. Girish suggested that if more villagers gave their labour, the money would not be needed.

Recalls B.S.Thimmappa, a local farmer who voluntarily lived with Girish and his crew at the tent, "It was like a festival. Every day, 60 to 100 people assembled in the morning and worked until dusk. This went on continuously for two months."

That apart, at the final stage, the villagers again fell short of Rs 90,000. They couldn't pay it thereafter. Girish waived it off, saying: "Oh, forget it. It was just my profit margin. Instead I have got the affection of so many people." The bond between the villagers and Girish are very strong. They invite him for all the functions at Baluvanthadka. He calls them to his Ayudh Pooja.

Land values have gone up at Baluvanthadka. Prices of essential commodities have come down. Disappearance of the black mark of 'inaccessible land' is bringing alliances for long-awaited marriages.

During construction, civil works like pylon construction, digging the land for building the anchor etc are done in the first phase. After the concrete is cured, work on the bridge continues without stopping. Totally it takes about four months to put up a bridge.

### Soldiering on

Most of the staff who made the initial bridges 18 years ago still work with Girish. Since they have grown older, they work at his fabrication unit, *Ayas Shilpa* (meaning structures of steel in Sanskrit) at Sullia. But what about you, we ask Girish. "I never get old. My body might have grown old, but the spirit is the same", he smiles. "Even now, if need be, I climb up the pylon."

Today those who see Girish's workaholic nature, his hectic schedule and frequent travel wouldn't believe that he had a heart attack seven years ago. Later, he underwent angioplasty. Immediately after the attack, while he was being



Girish on his emergency boat



## Handling accidents

**T**HERE is always the risk of accidents when construction takes place. That is why Girish Bharadwaj insists that a person be there on vigil at all times, waiting below the bridge, while construction work is on.

For this purpose, his team has built a ferry boat using bamboo, plastic bags and coal tar. It can accommodate six people. "The boat has cost us only Rs 1,000 but it is very useful," says Girish. Six safety jackets are kept ready on site. "Sometimes our boys are over confident. That is one reason why I stay on site to caution them," he says.

There have been only two accidents so far. The first took place at Makkandoor near Mercara when workers were replacing the deck. Suddenly Girish, who was waiting on the river bank, heard an unusual sound. The wooden plank had broken. Devaraj, one of the boys, had fallen into the river and was shouting for help. Girish, a swimming champ since his student days, didn't think twice. He jumped into the water.

Unfortunately, an old steel rope hit his leg and wounded him. He fell on the river bank. "I couldn't stand up. So I tried crawling." With great effort he reached Devaraj. "Somehow, I held his collar and dragged him to the bank. My leg was injured but that's okay. Devaraj survived." The second incident happened when another young worker climbed the pylon. He fell down and was lying flat in acute pain. Girish, who has trained in first aid, at once realised that he had injured his spine. If he was handled wrongly there could be permanent damage. With a sheet of polyester, a bed and half a dozen people, the injured man was gently shifted to the jeep and rushed to the nearest hospital. Months later he recovered and did not suffer any permanent damage.



treated at a hospital in Puttur, he was busy designing a bridge for a Hyderabad builder. Till a bridge gets ready for crossing, he floats between both banks of the river at least six to eight times a day in his unique ferry boat.

There are no moving parts in the bridge. The only maintenance required is greasing and painting against rusting. It is enough if this is done at least once in two years. With this, Girish hopes that the bridges can last for a century, if there is proper maintenance. The ropes might require replacement in 50 years, if no maintenance is done. In salty weather, a hanging bridge's life would be lower.

Compared to concrete foot-bridges, hanging bridges are cheaper only if the span is higher. But then, unlike concrete bridges, the hanging ones require protective maintenance against rusting.

There is another advantage with suspension bridges. If required, they can be dismantled and re-erected elsewhere. This, says Girish, can save 60 to 65 per cent of the total cost. The rest of the expenditure is on civil works. A bridge has been shifted from Pallangodu to Munhampara. The reason was that a motorable concrete bridge came to be constructed at Panathoor. The hanging bridge was no longer required.

### Concrete advantage

Is it possible to build motorable suspension bridges? "Yes, but again, if it's a smaller span, it is better to go for concrete bridges," is his advice. He had constructed a hanging bridge near Kanhangad with a width of 1.8 metres. Due to lack of funds, they couldn't put the lateral stiffening girders.

Now, an estate owner from near Ooty wants him to build a 50-metre-long hanging bridge on which his jeep can pass. "I strongly advised him against it because a concrete bridge would be a better choice and relatively cheaper; but the owner seems to be adamant about a hanging bridge," he says.

Right now he has six bridges in the pipeline and is planning a 1.2 km long one in Tamil Nadu. It will serve 9,000 people. "It is possible. But depending on the availability of the length of the multi-strand steel rope, we might have to

**People's planning has been a blessing in Kerala with its three-tiered panchayats being able to sanction money for such development works. This is one reason why so many bridges have come up in Kerala.**

go for four or five spans in between," says Girish.

Since there is no other agency in Karnataka and neighbouring states which is consistently building hanging bridges, Girish has to yield to pressures now and then. It is under such pressure that he started taking contracts for bridges. Delay in payments and unforeseen losses aren't negligible with contract work. "That is quite an irritating experience. You have to yield if you are to complete the work. In such a case there remains no difference between me and an illiterate contractor. I feel like running out of this. But in villages, seeing the misery of people, their plight, I tell myself that at least for their sake I should tolerate this unpleasantness."

### Bridges unlimited

The ground reality is that there are hundreds and thousands of sites where a hanging bridge would serve as a crutch to suffering communities. Recalls Girish: "Dakshina Kannada Zilla Panchayath has received applications for SFBs at 41 sites from three taluks alone - Puttur, Buntwal and Belthangadi. These are community demands. There must be more sites where it will help the communities."

Projects that have been referred to Girish and abandoned subsequently for

## *A Swiss man's mission brings him to India*

# Toni finds a bridge brother

**I**N September, while working on a bridge near Warangal in Andhra Pradesh, Girish Bharadwaj got an unusual phone call from Mustafa, his friend in Sullia. "A foreigner has come here. He calls you his brother. Now tell me, how many brothers do you have?" he asked.

It was Toni Ruttiman, 40, a Swiss who has been passionately making foot bridges for poor communities in South America, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

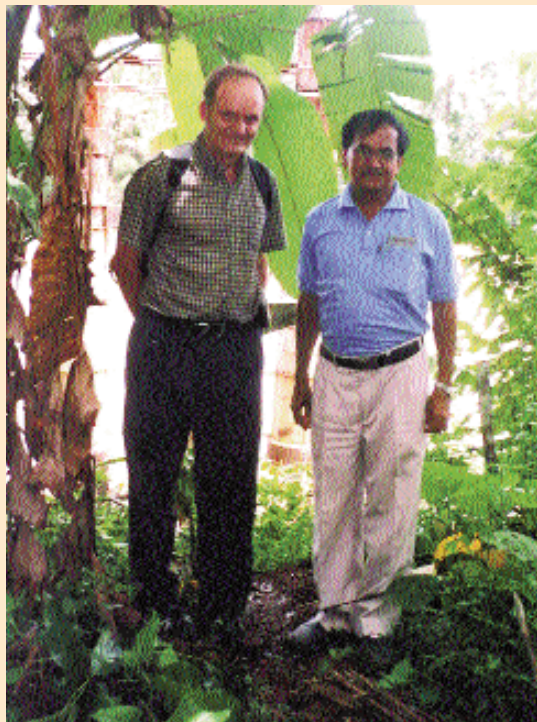
All Toni had was an address of four lines. He arrived in Sullia without informing anyone.

Girish had never heard of him. But Toni knew about Girish. A friend at the Indian Embassy had read about Girish on the Internet and sent Toni a message: "Don't think you are the only bridge-builder. There is one more in India."

"When I first read about Girish, I wanted to meet him. Not so much because of the bridges, which are actually stronger, often of longer span and probably more durable than those we help build," says Toni. "But because I saw a man who, like me, had given nearly 20 years of his life to help people get across rivers, to connect them and who does this out of a sense of duty to serve, without any profit motive. I have not been disappointed for he really turned out to be a brother in spirit and a teacher."

The two 'brothers' exchanged lots of stories. Toni stayed for 10 days. He saw some of Girish's bridges and talked to local people. "Toni is really great. He has dedicated his whole life to making bridges with people's participation," said Girish.

Toni is not an engineer. He makes bridges using observation, experience and commonsense. "The bridge is built by peasants themselves with help from good-hearted companies, authorities and



Toni (left) with brother Girish.

individuals. There is no name of anyone on the bridge, no logo, no profit," says Toni who loves to invoke Mahatma Gandhi.

In South America he has made 150 bridges for half a million people in Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico.

"I go find where people need a bridge. I show them pictures of bridges built by peasants. I show them myself: free, my life for the poor not employed by anyone," says Toni.

It takes him an hour to measure the proposed bridge site, make calculations and markings for excavations. The people are informed about their contribution: sand, gravel, stone, and 60 men for three days of labour to cement materials and another two days to erect the bridge.

"They hear what we will give: steel pipes and steel wire ropes received from friendly companies abroad, welding, transportation and building guidance," explains Toni.

"When they all agree, they let me know. We start welding the bridge kit, they start making excavations and accumulating sand and stone."

A date is fixed. Within three days the initial phase of bridge making is done.

"Neither peasants nor us like to waste precious time," says Toni. "In the rare case that excavations have not been made or 60 people don't care to show up, we wait two hours, then we leave, and that bridge is cancelled. The bridge kit is used on another site."

On the third visit which takes place after three to four weeks when the concrete has hardened, Toni and his men bring the cables and bridge deck elements. For the first 250 bridges, the farmers brought hard wood for the bridge deck, though these are now made of steel.

In two or three days the bridge is rigged up with help from 60 villagers. "Handshakes and good wishes are exchanged and we disappear to the next place," says Toni. He has colleagues like Walter in Ecuador and Yin Sopul and Pen Sopoan in Cambodia. "We build the bridges simultaneously, all guided through my laptop. Currently there are 18 bridges in progress and material is being transported and pre-fabricated for 140 bridges."



one reason or the other would run into hundreds. Since the proposals are always demand driven, under able leadership and by wise organisation skills, there is an in-built scope to meet part of the expenditure of SFB's by people's participation.

Is there any way in which the pace of building such bridges can be geared up? Girish has suggestions. "That's what I was telling this Madhya Pradesh MP's secretary. Give me a dedicated engineer and a dozen hard working boys. I will accompany and guide them till the completion of two or three bridges. Thereafter, they can do it on their own."

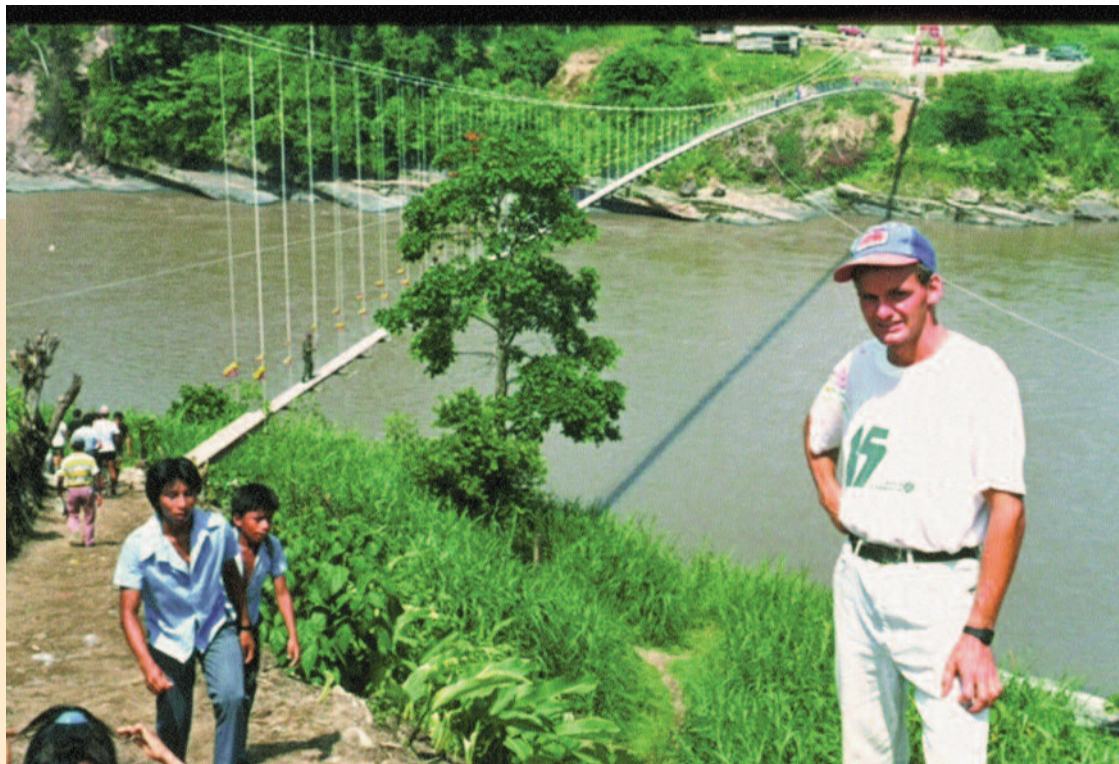
About 30 per cent of the cost of a bridge is labour. Even unskilled labourers are okay. If communities organise themselves and provide voluntary labour, points out Girish, they can save this amount.

Girish's bridge-building team always comprises a mixture of trained staff and freshers. In this way some new people are trained each time. "This is work anybody can learn," he says.

People's participation is important for one more reason. Labour is becoming scarce. "Earlier we had any number of people willing to be employed as workers on a project. Now they are hard to find even if we advertise."

### People's participation

Out of the 66 bridges built so far, 24 were made in Kerala. People's planning has been a blessing in Kerala with the three-tiered panchayats being able to sanction money for such development works. This is one reason why so many



Toni's bridge in Cambodia and people using one of his bridges (below).

In 2000 Toni started building a bridge at Lempa Valley on the border between the Honduras and El Salvador to connect people separated by a river. Pieces of the prefabricated bridge had to be transported to the Honduras. Toni figured the best way to do this would be by helicopter. Although the authorities agreed, this simple request got mired in red tape and weeks passed. Finally, villagers carried the prefabricated bridge on their backs, pushing and hauling with pulleys and ropes. Since wood was scarce in the Honduras, the peasants of El Salvador contributed. The cement came from the Honduras. It was peasants, malnourished and barefoot, who built the bridge.

Finally, the bridge was ready. Hondurans and El Salvadorians were thrilled. Their ministers now turned up in full regalia for the inauguration. Just as the authorities finished their speeches and were walking to the bridge everything started swaying. An earthquake, 7.6 in magnitude on the Richter scale had struck. Toni nearly panicked. Houses came tumbling down but his people's bridge stood strong.

In 2002, Toni was invited by the Cambodian government to make bridges.

He built his first bridge for them at Banan, 22 km from Battambang, Cambodia's second largest city.

"The bridge over the river Sangker serves peasants and delights thousands of visitors who come every weekend from Battambang to Banan on their motorcycles and in packed pick-ups. They even come from other provinces to stand on the bridge and have their pictures taken," says Toni.

"The peasants sell their fresh produce directly at the riverside to the people

bridges have come up in Kerala. "The spirit of people's participation is also far more there when compared to our Karnataka," Girish says.

Some years ago, 'Instruct', a Bangalore-based training organisation invited Girish to conduct classes for Bhutanese engineers. While he was explaining the SFB design, he noticed that the trainees were yawning. On enquiry, Girish learnt that they knew the design very well, but faced problems with erection. The method followed by them was very cumbersome. They were so impressed by Girish's work that after the workshop was over they came to his hometown, studied the bridges and went back filled with confidence.

As we were talking, a message came that the new footbridge was almost ready. We were the anonymous inaugurators. School children, on their way home, stopped to gaze at the new bridge with awe. Housewives, including grandmas, came out to look at the new neighbour who would serve them—the hanging bridge.

As the sun started sinking in the horizon, Girish walked on the footbridge with his never fading smiling. "Looking back, what do you now think about this? If you hadn't heeded your father's advice, what would you have been?" I ask Girish.

"Oh, I would have been lost somewhere," he said. "I would have been a cog in the machine. I get a lot of happiness from this work. In between bridge projects, my general fabrication work continues to sustain me and my staff." Girish then recited from HW Longfellow, a poet who has inspired him greatly.

*Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime  
And departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time.*

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from town, along with cooked food and drinks. An entire market has developed around the bridge, and the visitors bring new income to the peasants." Seeing this, Toni reassembled the bridge so that it could cope with the overload.

"A second bridge made at Kampong Pil, 10 km upstream from Battambang, turned out to be one of our most beautiful bridges ever. The villagers are so proud of it, that afterwards they adorned the bridge with a special handrail, lighting for the night and pretty entrances with cement and carved wood. Then they did landscaping on both riversides, and put up wooden terraces and benches for sitting and enjoying the beautiful river scenery with its fishing boats, the bridge, the monastery, the palms and mango trees," says Toni.

A bridge in Pailin, the last stronghold of the Khmer Rouge, saw some 50 men do the cementing work. Over 30 were crippled, or had a prosthetic. Yet they made the bridge.

"It might be possible to count the many tons of goods and thousands of human beings actually crossing all our bridges in the world in one year. But how can we possibly measure the giggling of the children, the pride of the adults, the avoided suffering of the sick, or the gained knowledge of the students," says Toni.

Toni has battled infection, malaria, snakes and insects to make bridges. In Cambodia there was the constant fear of landmines. In December 2002, he was diagnosed with Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) an inflammatory disorder of the

peripheral nerves that paralyzes the nerves of the arms, legs, lungs, neck, and those controlling the eyes, throat and heart.

He says it was his life, his experience of working with peasants and enduring long years of hardship which gave him the strength to fight the illness. Under the care of the Cambodian Prime Minister's personal physician, he was then sent to the Sirindhorn National Medical Rehabilitation Centre, a government clinic outside Bangkok, named after Thailand's Crown Princess Sirindhorn. In April 2003 he was back on his feet after an excruciating period of recovery where he exercised eight hours a day, helped by physicians at the centre.

Toni has been honoured with an award by the International Association of Bridge and Structural Engineers (IABSE). Klaus Ostfeld, president said: "Toni is not a graduated engineer, he is - as an autodidact engineer - going out directly and does what an engineer was meant to do: construct structures which can help mankind to make a better and safer life."

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# Business

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## BEYOND PROFIT

**Rethink money with us. What should the entrepreneur of the future be like? How can you get rich and still serve society? Do causes need bottom lines?**

## Helpline is 1, but VOICE is not shouting

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

A helpline set up by Consumer VOICE completed a full year on October 2 with little to celebrate, but nevertheless eager to build a more vigorous presence for itself.

The helpline was set up at the urging of the Union ministry for chemicals and fertilisers. Ram Bilas Paswan, the minister, wanted to check profiteering in the prices of medicines.

However, over this whole year the helpline has received only 3,719 complaints at its call centre and a mere 382 relate to medicines.

Part of the reason for the few calls has been Consumer VOICE's limited resources and the absence of publicity. Initially, the government put the helpline number in advertising. But the budget for publicity dried up and so did public awareness.

But perhaps a much bigger reason for people not calling in is the complexity of lodging a complaint. In the absence of the government streamlining the complaint mechanism and providing a single window for complaints about drug prices and quality, consumers do call but then get daunted and give up.

Most of the complaints that the helpline receives are with regard to the MRP of products. There are also complaints against power firms, banks, airways, phone companies, educational institutions, builders and so on.

The complaints about medicines, for which the helpline was really launched, have been declining since the first three months after the helpline's launch. In September this year, there was not a single complaint. In August there were three complaints and in July five.

The process for complaining is not easy. A consumer who calls the helpline saying the price he/she has been charged for a drug is too high is told to write to the company and lodge a formal complaint.

Consumer VOICE can step in only when it has a record on the basis of which it can act. But for an ordinary consumer to access a company and register a complaint isn't easy. Invariably, there is no specific person who will receive the complaint on a company's behalf and ensure that it is followed up.

In the case of spurious drugs, it is even more difficult to complain. So far not one of the consumers calling the helpline about a spurious medicine has gone ahead with the complaint because the procedure is cumbersome.

A spurious drugs complaint requires collecting three samples of the drug from the same production batch. The samples have to be collected in front of the chemist, who has to be informed why the samples are being collected. The samples have then to be sent to an accredited laboratory for testing.

In addition, there are serious issues of banned drugs and irrational formula-

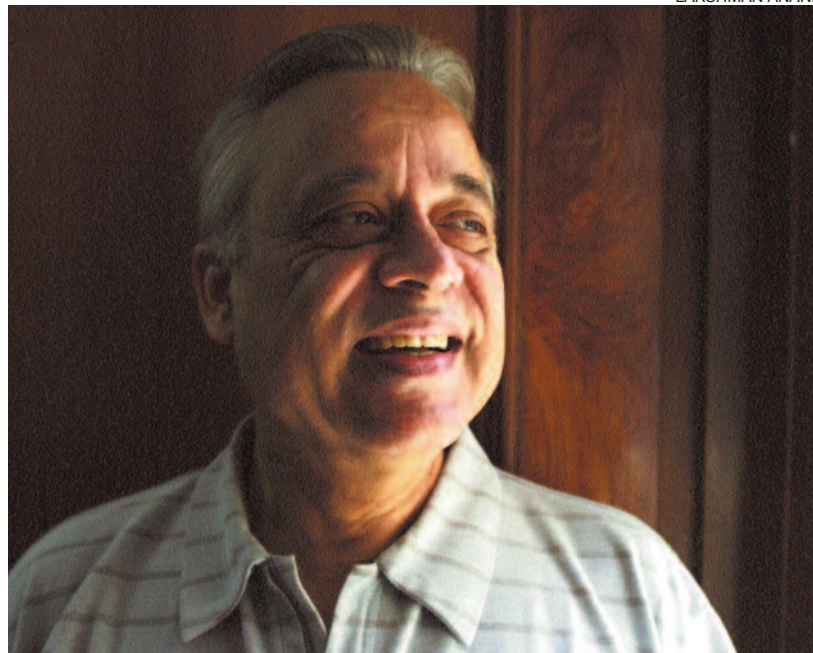
tions against which the consumer has no recourse.

*Civil Society* spoke to the bustling **Bejon Misra**, executive director of Consumer VOICE, about the helpline and what should be done.

**Your helpline has completed a year. What has it achieved?**

It has provided a connect with consumers from all over India. We set up the helpline at the urging of the government. Ram Bilas Paswan wanted to check the prices of drugs and ensure that people were not being overcharged. However, as

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Bejon Misra

it was started on our own without any government support we received only a few complaints on medicine prices. Huge resources are needed for promoting the helpline number and in the absence of wide publicity the helpline does not catch the attention of the public. The helpline is run out of a call centre in Gurgaon, which also sells subscriptions for our magazine Consumer VOICE. The cost of running the helpline is met out of the commission the call centre gets on subscriptions.

**With the National Pharmaceuticals Pricing Authority (NPPA) in place why should pricing of medicines be an issue?**

The NPPA deals only with bulk drugs. Of the bulk drugs in its mandate, only 10 per cent are on the Indian market. So, the NPPA's role is limited and does little to protect the interests

of the consumer in terms of fast moving and essential drugs.

**So, what about fake drugs, drugs banned elsewhere but sold here and so on?**

These come under the drug controller, who comes under the Union health ministry. We have been shouting ourselves hoarse for the past so many years to bring everything under one roof but the government has not listened. The government has now entrusted a group of ministers with the task of finding a solution to such concerns. This means more consultations and delays rather than prompt action in the interest of the consumer.

**What do we know about medicines we buy? Who verifies the claims made by pharmaceutical companies?**

There is no means of verifying the claims made by companies by a common consumer or for that matter by a small consumer organisation working in India. The compositions and quantities stated by them go unchecked under the present system and what is existing is not at all transparent or credible.

**When a consumer calls your helpline with a complaint about a drug's price or quality what happens?**

We first tell the consumer about his/her rights so as to be reassuring and create

*(Continued on next page)*



# PVR hits the street for children

**Manisha Sobrajani**  
New Delhi

STREET children are ardent fans of Bollywood. You can see them congregating around movie halls, checking out shows with religious zeal. Serious talk takes place before a decision on which film they'd like to watch is arrived at. However the new cinema halls with their posh environs and expensive tickets have become inaccessible to street children. The children have remained but they can't go to the movies like they used to.

PVR Pvt Ltd, which owns cinema halls and multiplexes in Delhi and NCR, is reaching out to vulnerable children through a programme called Childscapes.

The idea is to transform the lives and restore the dignity of street children in and around the PVR neighbourhood through educational, social and cultural activities of PVR's corporate social responsibility group called Network for Enablement and Social Transformation (NEST). The programme is running at the Basant Lok Community Centre in New Delhi with Katha and at Saket with Literacy India. About 150 children are part of it.

The project works in alliance with the Chief Minister's Office, Resident Welfare Associations and market bodies.

**Selena Bijli**, whose husband, Ajay Bijli, is the promoter of PVR, is on the advisory board of NEST. She spoke to *Civil Society* about Childscapes.

## Why was this programme started?

Our vision is to work together with government bodies and the community to spearhead a movement for better social conditions. NEST was initiated in 2006. Childscapes is a very small endeavour. It is a drop in the ocean. There are lots of NGOs working with children, and we didn't want ours to be just another programme, so we started on a very small scale with support from communities in Basant Lok and Saket.

## What are the various activities under Childscapes?

Even before we launched Childscapes, we were very certain that we didn't want to take the children away from their surroundings or families and place them in a completely different set-up. We were also aware that most of these children were bread-earners in their families and it would be completely impractical to engage with them for the whole day. So all we do is keep them involved for a few hours in the morning, during which their education and health are of prime concern for us. We have designed our activities in a way

(Continued from previous page)

awareness. We then guide the consumer in lodging a complaint with the company. It is important to create a record or data on such complaints. It is only if the company does not respond that we represent the consumer and bring it to the notice of the regulators.

But all this is easier said than done. Most companies don't have mechanisms for redressing complaints. Even when we take up a price complaint, companies disown the product, deny the batch number etc.

The procedure for quality checks is more tricky. The consumer has to collect samples as per the provisions of law in a scientific manner and then arrange to send the samples so collected in a sealed manner to any of the government accredited laboratories closest to the consumer. This means knowledge on how to draw samples, purchase the products for testing purpose and then depositing the products along with the test fees to the government approved laboratories for testing.

In 1986 the government changed the law so that a consumer could collect and submit samples for testing. But it is now 20 years since we have been asking for simpler, consumer-friendly procedures to ensure transparency in checking on the potency of medicines.



Selena Bijli

**The idea is to transform the lives and restore the dignity of street children in and around the PVR neighbourhood.**

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that the children like to participate.

PVR ki Paathshala, for instance, is a basic literacy programme for underprivileged children so that they can get school certificates that will equip them with an academic foundation for future careers.

Street to School is aimed at children between five and 12 years. The idea is to prepare them to join mainstream primary and secondary schools. Many children from Childscapes have already been adopted by government and public schools.

We also talk to children about health and the importance of hygiene.

## Was it difficult to convince children?

Any new venture is bound to encounter cynicism. We did, too. Most children and their families told us that there are lots of such initiatives. What will you be able to do with this programme? But we were determined, and the fact that we had merely four or five children in the initial days did not dampen our spirits. We got these children to speak to other children about what they did while they were with us and we now have an attendance of more than 50 children per day.

They are given uniforms and stationery by us. Punjabi by Nature (a well-known restaurant) sponsors their afternoon meal every day. All this has helped tremendously to ensure that the children come regularly.

Luckily, we have had support from the police, and they haven't harassed us or the children. This is of huge significance to us. We were also awarded the Bhagidari Award from the Chief Minister's office last year.

## Do you see a difference in the children?

The children definitely look happy and content. Of course, some children are exceptional. They not only motivate other children around them but also keep our spirits high.

Sanker, a rag-picker at the Basant Lok Community Centre, is today part of a mainstream school. He ensures that all 12 children from his slum are encouraged and motivated every morning to attend the school. Malik, another child from Basant Lok has now got a job. Anwar is the brightest boy in our team. He counsels fellow students on issues like drug abuse.

## Where do you see Childscapes in the future?

We hope to reach out to 500 street children by next year. Cinema is the centre of all our activities. So, we will be starting a programme called Child Watch, an initiative to get Cinema, Celebrity and Children together.

**What is the response of companies? Do they come to you and seek more transparent systems that would be in the interest of their own brands and the consumer? After all they should be worried about fake drugs sold under their brand names.**

The attitude of companies is changing --- especially the bigger ones. A GSK or a Ranbaxy feels concerned. They say they want prices to come down and that they would like to see an end to fake drugs. But they do business within a larger system that is not given to such transparency. The high commissions of the pharmacies are the result of the stranglehold of the pharmacists' association.

**But what stops the best companies from coming forward and supporting independent testing and raising the threshold in the Indian market?**

There isn't the public pressure that will make them do so. Till we create awareness and reach a critical mass companies will not come forward.

## So, you would say it is a failure of civil society?

Yes. We have not been able to influence the public health system and demand quality from the manufacturers and the service providers. As I have always said: "An aware consumer is a protected consumer."



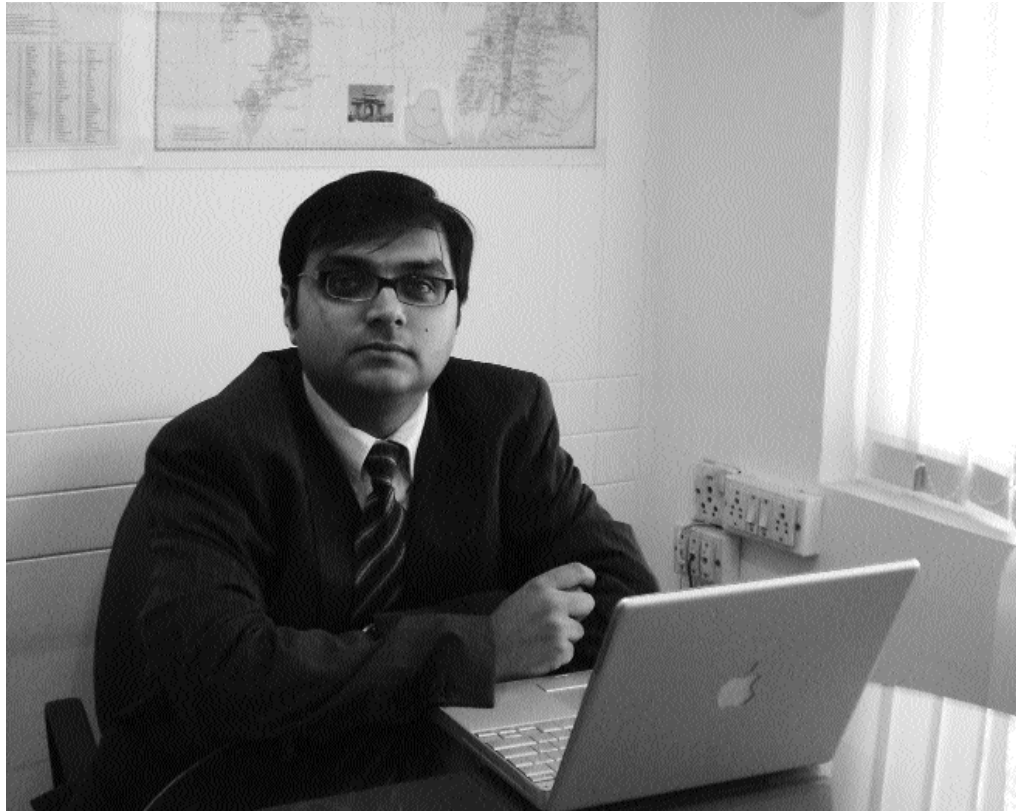
# 'The customer is in slums'

**Vidya Viswanathan**  
New Delhi

**M**EDICINE Shoppe was a frontrunner when the retail sector was liberalised in India. Its founder, Viraj Gandhi, was studying Economics at Babson College in the US when he heard of retail chains like Crossword and Shopper's Stop opening in India. His family promoted pharma companies like Dolphin Laboratories and Gujarat Lyka.

**Viraj Gandhi** worked on a project idea for a retail chain in the large but fragmented and inefficient pharmacy business. His company, Melrose Trading is a master franchisee for Medicine Shoppe US, and is also a venture funded by APIDC's Biotech Fund and Actis. The first shop came up in 1999, and now the chain has 135 stores in Maharashtra, Goa and Gujarat.

In 2006, Viraj Gandhi got funding from the Acumen Fund to start a pharmacy chain called 'Sehat' for low-income groups. This is a unique model where each store has a trained MBBS doctor and consultation is free. The store which largely sells high-quality generics makes money on prescription sales and sale of glasses in the vision centre. Gandhi claims that medicines from his shop are 30 to 40 per cent cheaper and the customers get to consult a doctor at locations where mostly quacks operate. Sehat, which now has eight outlets in Mumbai, has trained local people to man the shops. *Civil Society* spoke to Viraj Gandhi about his business model.



Viraj Gandhi

**In 1999 when you started you quoted very aggressive numbers for your stores.**

We have had to learn a lot in how to choose franchisees. We needed people with a desire to learn, people who believed in customer service. The existing pharmacies were very sceptical when we told them to charge only MRP and make up with volumes. Current pharmacies were not in a mood to change. So we had to appoint greenfield entrepreneurs. We were also clear that our shops had to be located where the community lives.

When we opened up our first shop in Lokhandwala, a residential area, and conducted health camps, provided health cards and loyalty programmes, people thought we were overcharging to offer these services. But this is a highly inefficient business where pharma companies internally have huge margins and they sell aggressively to physicians.

We are Mumbai's largest non-institutional buyer. We have our own warehouse and buy directly from the manufacturer or from a large authorised wholesaler. We save a lot of money in purchase and sell medicines at MRP. We offer services in the money that we have saved; for example the purchase points could lead to a free accident insurance. Our shops are also located in residential localities as I am interested in the repeat purchaser with chronic diseases. If we don't have a medicine when a customer comes we offer him a 10 per cent inconvenience discount and do a free home delivery.

**You come from a business family. So why did you raise venture capital?**

My family put in Rs 3 crore and my father said that if the business model is robust anybody should be willing to invest. That is the barometer. My family is still the largest shareholder.

**How did you start Sehat?**

I met Jaqueline Novogratz and her team in 2005. They convinced me that selling medicines in upmarket Juhu did not make a difference. They were certain that there was a huge untapped market in selling to the 650 million low-income group Indians. Their analysts brainstormed with us for a week to work on the model.

**Will the returns from this business be the same as in the main retail store?**

Yes. Probably, even better. The rents in Bandra or Juhu have now become lopsided – it costs Rs 400 a square feet. Nobody wants to open stalls in slums. But the customer is there and you have to go there. The competition is increasing at the top.

**You have doctors on your rolls. How do you get physicians you can afford?**

**'We buy high quality generics. They are 30 per cent cheaper than the brands. The benefits are passed to the consumer.'**



Sehat has qualified doctors for low income people.

We have an attached clinic at all Sehat stores. We found doctors who have a passion to do something. You find them in hospitals in the district block headquarters and municipal headquarters. People are spending money and getting taken for a ride. Only two out of about 15 doctors are qualified MBBS doctors in these locations and spurious medicines are also sold. With us, if a patient does not buy medicine, he pays Rs 20 per visit and follow-up visits are free. This builds confidence in our model.

**Where do you buy generics? Do you go to low-cost producers like Locost?**

We buy high quality generics. They are 30 per cent cheaper than the brands. We buy generics directly from the company and pass on the benefits to the consumer. We are making money and the consumer pays 30 to 40 per cent less. We cannot make money at the prices Locost sells to non-profits. We are a business and have to make money to expand.

**Is the process different in this business?**

The process is different. It is a different marketing model. The community outreach model is different. People here cannot read and can only listen. But radio advertising is prohibitively expensive. So we have a community of health workers. During the monsoon we talk to the community about clean water, hygiene and malaria in camps. Gradually they start asking on their own.

**How do you deal with medicines where generics are not available?**

It is available in a majority of cases. If there is a stomach ache for example, we would refer the customer to a gastro specialist. But we have preferred partners where we give a 20 per cent discount. We pass on the dealing that goes on between a doctor and a specialist to the consumer. In case of path labs too, we pass on the cut to the consumer.

**Where are your stores located? What did you learn from these?**

We have nine stores. We are analysing our customers. Three shops are in the slums, three are in the *chawls*, and three in middle-class locations; these are located in Kalyan, Mira Road, Kurla, Kankavali and Bhiwandi. Our target audience is anyone with a monthly income below Rs 8,000. We are running these stores because we want a larger say in them. The franchisee is an investor. I cannot share too many insights from the pilots. That is giving information away to the competition.



# Perspectives

## CATCHING TRENDS

**Have an idea? Perhaps a lost cause? Tell your story or just express an honest opinion in these pages.**

## Delhi's Bluelines and true lies

DUNU ROY

ON October 15, around 4,000 Blueline bus drivers gathered at a *dharamshala* in west Delhi to discuss the police crackdown against them. Along with the drivers, the buses also abstained from work on that day. The next day, newspaper headlines screamed "Blue Blackmail" and "Delhi held to ransom" and Chief Minister Sheila Dixit, threatened to invoke ESMA to force the buses back on the road.

The reaction smacked more of vendetta than reasoned sober reporting. And it contrasted starkly to the earlier endorsement of the government stand reported by these same newspapers that Blueline buses should be taken off the roads. Clearly, after the Iraq war, 'embedded' journalism has become the order of the day. Heads I win, tails you lose.

What is the reason for this legitimisation of the authoritarian line that is being pursued by an aggressive media (and their middle class supporters) baying for blood? Perhaps, some clues to the answer may lie in the statistics that these newspapers produce. For instance, we are mercilessly told that there have been 96 deaths this last year from accidents involving Bluelines. Yet, a perusal of the reports appearing from January to October 2007 in one of the most persistent papers reveals that they have stories for only 32 deaths in 25 accidents. What is curious is that even the supposed 96 is less than the 122 recorded last year, and this 122 was about 6 per cent of the total road deaths in that year. So why this great outrage over these few accidents? Why is there no attempt to look at the causes of literally thousands of other deaths?

Equally curious is what the paper's reports reveal about the unfortunate people who died. Of the 32, 13 were pedestrians, seven were on two-wheelers, three each were either passengers who had just got off buses or cyclists who came in the way, two were bus commuters, and only one was a motorist!

What is the possible reason for this distribution? If the Bluelines were driving in a wayward fashion in the middle of the roads, as alleged by the police, then surely they should have been hitting cars more often. Why is it, then, that buses are forced to share road space with pedestrians, two wheelers, and cyclists – road users who are more likely to be in the inner lanes? And why is the media suddenly so concerned about ordinary people when they haven't figured on their pages more serious concerns of shelter, livelihoods, and security?

Perhaps the concern is simulated and the outrage merely contrived? According to the government's statistics, almost 60 per cent of road users travel by public buses, 27 per cent by private two and four wheelers (not to mention the somewhat fraudulent figure of 5 per cent on bicycles). Yet, buses comprise only

one per cent of vehicles on the road, while private motor vehicles number 91 per cent. And when the 'clean' CNG wave came it reduced DTC buses from about 4,400 to 3,000. So, if the media was so concerned about the common folk why has it not demanded more buses and more road space for the buses? Even eminent judicial concerns decreed way back in 1998 that there should have been 10,000 buses on the roads by 2001. Yet six years later, there are only 8,300 (including the 'rural' RTVs and 1,200 that ply on inter-city routes!) and the courts remain silent,

while the government has just loftily declared (using the so-called 'killer' Bluelines as a pretext) that they are placing orders for 4,500 new buses to 'phase out' the Bluelines – which will come by 2009, when the demand will be for 16,000 buses!

So why do the numbers of buses remain far short of requirements while there seems to be no limit to the number of private vehicles that can be sold in the city? Is it just implementation flaws and corruption or is there something queer going on at the policy level? There is nothing new about the concern with 'efficient' functioning of the public transport system. The private buses were brought into the public domain as far back as 1948, precisely on that rationale. They were made the baby of the Municipal Corporation in 1958, then again reverted to the Union Government in 1971, eventually becoming the responsibility of the Delhi Government in 1996. Meanwhile, as part of 'reforms', there has been no fresh recruitment into DTC for 19 years while the system has again slowly been outsourced (5,200 of the 8,300 buses are with private owners, the DTC depots have been made 'autonomous'). Obviously, our respected policy makers have tried out all forms of governance and administration over six decades (and three generations) and still not found a solution!

On the other hand, while a mere Rs 1,800 crore will be invested in the new buses, the government has already taken huge loans to invest in that other shining icon of 'public' transport – the Metro. Phase I costs Rs 6,000 crore, and Phase II will cost another 11,000 crore; and both will together carry an anticipated 26 lakh passengers by 2011, when the buses are already carrying 55 lakh daily. Not only that, the Metro proposes to carry these passengers by taking them off the buses – in other words, making travel more expensive for the common man. The cheapest ticket costs Rs 7 on the Metro while the buses still manage with Rs 3 for a longer distance – and give concessions to boot! Hence, obeying the competitive impulse, in the 65 km of Phase I, already 15 routes and 58 buses of DTC, and three routes and 106 buses of STA have been deliberately discontinued and curtailed on Metro routes. In spite of this,

(Continued on page 29)



LAKSHMAN ANAND

**If Bluelines were driving in a wayward fashion in the middle of the road, then surely they should have been hitting cars more often. Why are buses forced to share road space with road users who are likely to be in the inner lanes?**



# Overnight land grab in Bomja

MILINDO CHAKRABARTI

**R**ECENTLY, the state took over not just one or two, but 226 hectares of land. This incident did not happen in West Bengal, Punjab or Maharashtra but in Arunachal Pradesh, perhaps the reason why it was overlooked. The takeover did not involve 'private' land, but was earlier owned collectively by villagers living around it.

The land in question is in Bomja village located in the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh. As per the 2001 census, 31 households reside in this village with a population of 118 and an unbelievably high sex ratio of 1408 females per thousand male. The latest survey in 2003 identified 30 of these households to be below the poverty line. Only about 10 individuals among them studied beyond Class IV.

About a year and a half ago, the Forest Department in Arunachal Pradesh found this land bordered by the porter track from Bomja to Kharung village on the north, and the old porter track between these two villages on the south. The land is surrounded by a *jhora* on the west and community land on the east. An agreement to introduce compensatory afforestation on this plot of land was signed by the range Forest Officer, Jang Social Forestry Range and two people's representatives – Sang Dondup and Tashi Lhamu with Thuten Tashi standing in as the witness to the agreement. The agreement was accorded a legal status by Lobsang Tsetan, Judicial Magistrate, IInd Class, located at Thingbu on May 10, 2006.

#### As per the agreement:

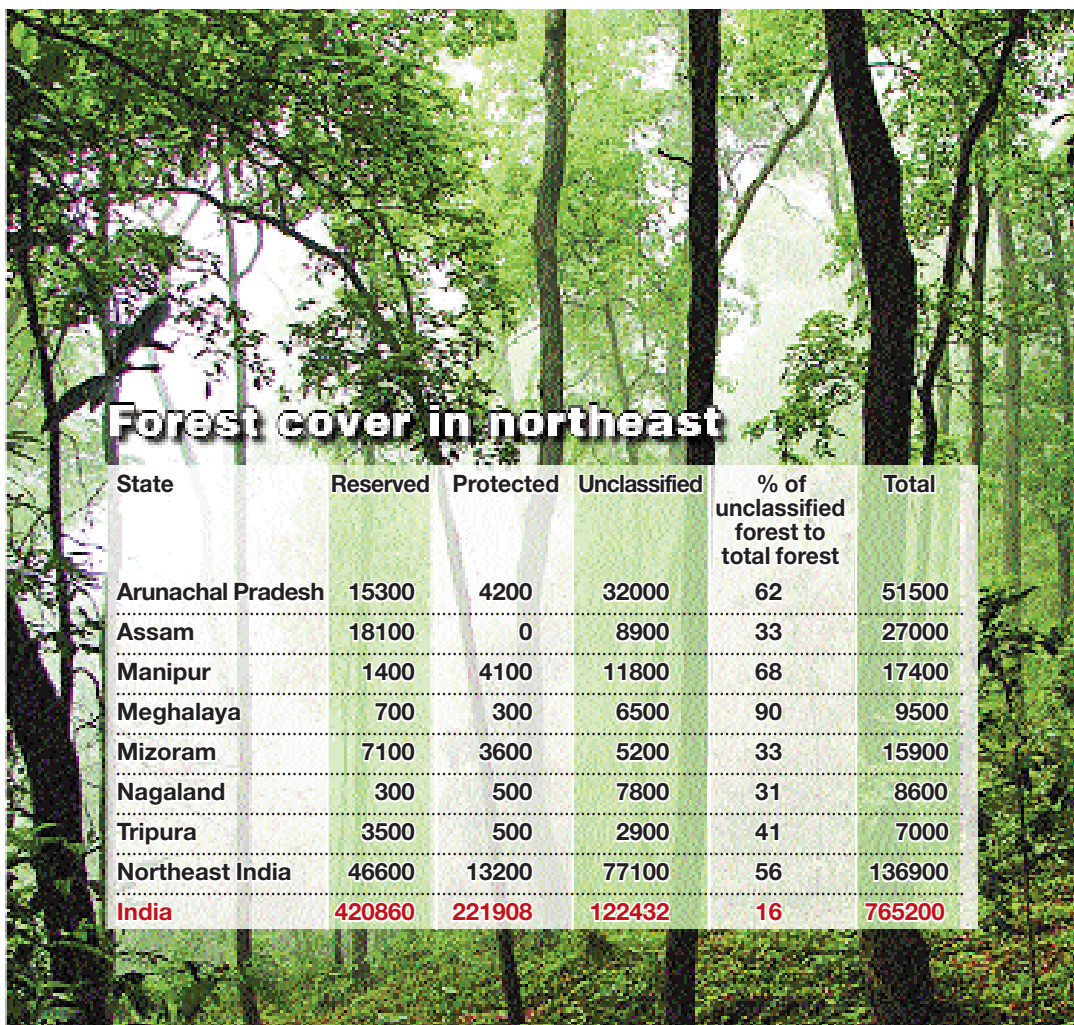
- The signatories declare "on behalf of the village" to "have no objection for raising compensatory afforestation plantation on the piece of land".
- The signatories also agreed to forgo any future "claim over the land" and vested the right of utilisation for afforestation and other ancillary activities to the Forest Department.
- The villagers promised total cooperation to the officials of the Forest Department and the labourers hired by it to facilitate compensatory re-afforestation on the taken over land.
- The villagers would have no objection for declaring the said piece of land as protected forest such that the rights and claim over the forest produce by the village will be decided as per the laid down norms by the government during that period, ie, when the trees attained maturity.

In short, the agreement paves the way for transfer of property rights on a substantial chunk of land from the community to the state. And, unlike what was witnessed in other parts of the country, the transition was completely peaceful with no bloodshed, no loss of life and property.

More interestingly, this episode happens when a background paper prepared in 2006 by Community Forest International, a noted international think tank, observes with concern: "Unlike other regions in India, administrative control of forest in the northeast is predominantly by the community with much of the forests listed as "unclassified". As in other parts of India, the state forest departments administer Reserved and Protected forests. The reluctance of state forest departments to consider changing the "unclassified" category to reflect community claims to much of these forests remains an ongoing source of tension. As such, their attitudes do not appreciate the special constitutional safeguards accorded to indigenous people of the region, nor their historic claims to that land, rather it reflects an orientation that such forests are waiting to be classified as "reserved" or "protected" forests that would then place them under the management of the state forest departments."

Incidentally, the extent of "unclassified" forests in north-east India is quite high. The share of community forests in the total area under forests of north-east India is a staggering 56 per cent. In comparison the corresponding figures for India is very low, indicating the special role community forests play in the north eastern states. Obviously, some special policy approaches are necessary to manage the forests. (see table)

Why did the villagers agree to hand over the community land to the forest



**Circumstantial evidence suggests the villagers have perhaps been duped into converting people's property into state property.**

department? Have they been coerced to sign the agreement? It is ruled out that they have been lured into signing the agreement, as no compensation has been paid to them as per the agreement document. Pending further investigations, circumstantial evidence suggests that perhaps they have been duped into simply carrying out the agenda of converting people's property into state property.

Identification of land for compensatory re-afforestation has assumed considerable importance in view of the present legal requirements of the land. Any diversion of forest land is to be statutorily compensated by afforestation in non-forested or degraded forest land. A designated fund called CAMPA has been instituted to pool the funds realised in the name of compensatory afforestation, though a large part of the money realised under this clause is

lying unutilised. The questions that emerge out of the agreement are:

- Have the villagers been paid any compensation for the land they handed over to the forest department? If not, why?
- If yes, why has the amount failed to find mention in the agreement deed?
- Has the compensation been adequate according to the currently evolving norms of compensation nationally?

The agreement's tenor suggests that perhaps no such compensation has been paid.

The concern gains more relevance as one considers that the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) submitted a proposal to the Supreme Court calling for a considerable increase in the compensation to be paid by user agencies for diversion of forest land to other uses. Under such circumstances, the CEC cannot escape the responsibility of identifying the amount to be paid as compensation to these hapless communities who are willingly (or unwillingly) giving up their lands to facilitate compensatory re-afforestation. The Kanchan Chopra Committee suggested some such mechanisms. CEC in its response considered the exercise beyond the scope of the brief given to the committee, and gave the recommendations an untimely death sentence. The experiences from Bomja village can be reason enough to initiate the necessary steps.



# How Paris celebrates culture

RIAZ QUADIR

**O**FTEN, in societies made up of the people, governed by the people and for the benefit of the people, we see wonderful things happening. 'Nuit Blanche' or 'All-Nighter' in France is one such example. Another creation of Paris' brilliant mayor, Bertrand Delanoë and his deputy, Christophe Girard, Nuit Blanche was designed to make the vast cultural wealth of France's metropolis available and accessible to the common man for two nights in the first weekend of October – before his long winter hibernation. The year was 2002 and since then the event has picked up momentum, not just in France but around the world. That includes not only the grand old ladies like Rome, Rio and Chicago but Gaza and Tel Aviv as well.

Today, Berlin, Brussels, Madrid, Montreal, Toronto, Sao Paulo, Skopje, Tirana, Valletta and a host of other cities around the planet are holding their own version of Nuit Blanche, albeit at different times of the year. The idea remains the same: Let the people enjoy the cultural wealth of their nation. "Toronto certainly loves the magic and the mysteries of the night. Its people prove they love to be together to share and discover its beauties and secrets in the name of art," said Christophe Girard inaugurating the premiere in Toronto last year.

Today, Nuit Blanche has incorporated another important aspect: that of presenting the works of wonderful but little known artists. Seeing the 24 metres long supine skeleton, Calamita Cosmica by Gino De Dominicis, the unusual and eccentric Italian artist who died in 1998, between the twin pools behind the Chateau, overlooking one of the most magnificent gardens in the world in the luminous glow of the clear autumnal night, was an experience in itself.

Equally fascinating was the marriage of the old with the new: Swiss artist, John Armleder's transformation of the giant 155 metres long hall with its five storey hemispherical ceiling, the 17th century Orangerie designed by Louis XIV's Chief Architect, Jules Hardouin-Mansart, into a kaleidoscope resembling a plethora of giant fireflies orbiting this immense space, dwarfing the awe-struck spectators as they made their way across this elongated universe. A coup de champagne awaiting us at the end of the hall became mandatory to complete such a euphoric experience.

The idea of participation, of a collective, almost organic spirit engendered by the event is truly uplifting. Living a short walk away from the Chateau of Versailles I frequently use its grounds like my own backyard. Yet, seeing it during the Nuit Blanche last year (the first time in Versailles) was an experience

quite unlike any other: like seeing the by-now familiar Palace for the first time. The night had transformed it. The fabulous light and sound effects created a feast for the senses, untouched previously by the very same surroundings. The night held a sense of intimacy unmatched by broad daylight.

But more than that it was the common mass of humanity that shared in what was a common heritage for all of us but is often kept at a distance by a sense of privilege and grandeur often associated with museums and other national monuments.

This is perhaps less true of the French (and a few other Europeans) compared to the rest of the world. The French believe not only in educating themselves about the richness of their own culture, they find ways and means of making it accessible to the hoi polloi. Thus, free entrance to museums is possible for everyone on certain days of the month and year. Even the unemployed are given the right to indulge in cultural entertainment. Their status entitles them entrance to all sorts of cultural events, either free or at nominal costs. Even public transport is discounted for them, as it is for youth up to 26 years of age.

As with "Fete de la Musique", another grand idea popularised by the legendary Jacques Lang, the one time Minister of Culture during the 1980's, celebrating the summer solstice (on June 21st) as a day of music when music is everywhere, permeating every nook and cranny across the land. Today, barely 20 years later the practise has spread across Europe and is spilling beyond its borders. Fortunately, not everything about globalisation has to be bad. Like the blog, these are aspects which can bring people together in a positive way.

Beyond Coca Cola, McDonald's and Disney there are things from the occident that the world can emulate and benefit from. India, like the rest of the world - and probably more than most nations- has vast cultural wealth which hasn't been accessible to its people in an intimate way in which they can truly identify with as their heritage.

Let the people wake up to their true value. Let them not just be fancy posters for travel agents and ads for the tourism industry. Everything of value is not merely for export and earning the almighty dollar. We must first and foremost, reserve its enjoyment for the people of the land. The best wine, champagne, foie gras and all things wonderful are consumed by the French before the rest of the world gets to enjoy them. India's best tea, spices and all things nice are to be found primarily in far away foreign lands. Psychologists say that others tend to love and respect you only when you show love and respect to yourself. Perhaps there is a lesson to be learnt there.



The 24 metres long supine skeleton Calamita Cosmica on display

**The unemployed too can indulge in cultural entertainment. Their status entitles them entrance to cultural events at nominal cost. Even public transport is discounted for them and for youth.**

## Delhi's Bluelines and true lies

(Continued from page 27)

the Metro still cannot carry more than one-fourth of the original targets. And there are the 121 km of Phase II to still look forward to!

More is to be added to the heady cocktail of steady privatisation, shrinking fleets and personnel, more costly modes of travel, and obfuscation of facts. In the coming run-up to the Commonwealth Games in 2010, not only have 40 flyovers been proposed, but also nine car parks, an airport to handle six times more passengers than now, converting the Ring Road into expressways, seven corridors for the High Capacity Bus System, and about 170 km of roads to be widened and 'beautified'. Each one of these activities, which indiscriminately caters to the profligate demand for space by cars, is going to push the inner lane further on to where the pavements were earlier.

As it is, most pavements are now illegally occupied by the exorbitant growth

of private vehicles which find no other place to park. So where will the pedestrian and the cyclist go? How will they avoid the buses that occupy the same road space? Will deaths and accidents go down? Will there be enough buses for people to travel by? Or will people be forced to buy more two-wheelers just to get to work from home as the city grows further and further apart?

Eventually, who are the bluebloods who make these policies and take these decisions? Are they ever held accountable or do the same notables who announced dramatic steps in the preceding years, once again get to announce more dramatic steps when their previous orders fail dismally? Why is it that the judge and the jury and the police and the culprit are all rolled into the same persona and none can distinguish between them? These are the questions a vigilant press and people should be asking in a thriving democracy. They don't. Because the 'people' have now become reduced to puppets, and the journalists have entered the armoured tanks of the oppressor, as yet another 'war on terror' is unleashed in the capital city, in the name of truth, democracy and justice, on a gullible and unsuspecting people.

Dunu Roy is an activist with the Hazards Centre in New Delhi



# Reviewer

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## THE FINE PRINT

**Get behind the scenes. Books, films, theatre, street plays, posters, music, art shows. The one place to track creative people across the country.**

## Blank Noise? Listen again

**Shuktara Lal**  
Kolkata

ONE evening Jasmeen Pathreja, a student at the Srishti School of Art Design and Technology, was walking down main CMH road in Bangalore. "It was about 6 pm," she recalls. "It was not completely dark, nor lonely or quiet. I usually look at people when I walk. A cyclist went past me, completely non-threatening. I suddenly felt something cold soaking through my clothes. He had spat his *paan* on me."

As if being groped, squeezed or leered at isn't enough, women are spat at on the streets of cities by lascivious criminals. Filthy abuse is hurled. Ask any young woman how she feels. Street sexual assault is utterly humiliating. It makes you seethe with rage.

In India, such crimes are fobbed off as 'eve-teasing'—a mere joke or a prank. In reality this is violence inflicted on unsuspecting women innocently going about their daily routine.

One woman is harassed every 12 minutes in India, according to a report by the National Crime Records Bureau in 2002. Most of these crimes go unrecorded. Not many women do anything about it.

But Jasmeen Patheja decided to confront such crime. In 2003 she started Blank Noise, a community arts project that explores street dynamics and recognises 'eve teasing' as street sexual harassment or violence.

As a student at the Srishti School of Art Design and Technology in Bangalore, when Jasmeen had to formulate her final year project, she chose to focus on sexual harassment. The common thread linking the origins of Blank Noise with the project as it stands today is Jasmeen's use of art.

Blank Noise now has chapters in Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai, Hyderabad and Lucknow. In each of these cities, participating members think up ideas and stage, what Jasmeen calls, "interventions".

Art and performance are used to catch public attention to street sexual harassment. Blank Noise members, who take part, are not professional or even amateur performers. They are ordinary people (largely women) fighting for their right to walk on the streets of their cities without having to worry about safety. Blank Noise calls them 'Action Heroes.'

One successful and discerning intervention was aptly titled: "Did you ask for it?" Blank Noise members gathered clothes that women had worn when they were sexually harassed. These were then displayed as an installation.

"Did you ask for it" debunks the notion that women who dress 'provocatively' attract unwanted attention, for the clothes on display included not only

spaghetti-strap tops, but loose shirts and nondescript churidar-kurtas.

This accumulation of clothing is an ongoing process. Explains Jasmeen: "Blank Noise volunteers are spread all over. Individuals from Baramulla in Kashmir, Singapore, Pakistan, the Andaman Islands, Dindugal and Kolkata collect clothes to create such installations. We are also collaborating with Holla Back NYC, a New York-based agency, to collect clothes as testimonies in the US."

Another intervention gets a group of women to stand around traffic signals, each wearing a letter or a word. The words, when read together, ask out the question, "Y R U LOOKING AT ME?" An extension of this intervention involves get-



Jasmeen Pathreja

**Eve-teasing is fobbed off as a prank. In reality it is violence inflicted on innocent women.**

ting a group of women to stand on a road in the city for around 15 minutes, without having to feign being preoccupied, waiting for someone or talking on the phone.

Instead, the women are encouraged to stare at passersby. They are often asked to wear something they would not have worn ordinarily, fearing unsolicited comments or physical contact.

"The idea behind this is to get women to claim their city and build a relationship with it that does not come out of fear," explains Jasmeen. "The Action

Heroes who participate in these street actions feel a sense of empowerment, whether it is being able to say and believe, 'I never asked for it,' or simply walking in the middle of a footpath without bags and elbows placed in front of them."

In Delhi, an equally innovative intervention has been carried out. Women between nine to 70 years of age paint testimonials on the streets and pavements at night, writing their names, ages and the nature of the crimes they were subjected to.

Says Jasmeen: "The testimonials indicate that where one is standing could be a site where someone experienced street sexual harassment. This intervention also aims at breaking myths related to sexual harassment by covering all aspects, whether it is making sounds, ogling, touching, stalking, groping etc."

Blank Noise has an active blog which is an intrinsic part of its street campaigns. Bloggers are invited to narrate their experiences of street sexual harassment online.

Recently, the Blank Noise blog invited women to send a list of words or

*(Continued on next page)*



# Fairy tale on global warming

**Samita Rathor**  
New Delhi

**N**ITIN Das says his mission is to make 'extraordinary films with ordinary people.' He has recently completed a magical film about a young boy who finds a solution to global warming from a monk in the Himalayas.

The film, 'Global Warming-A Fable from the Himalayas,' is storytelling at its best. Nitin proves that it takes less than eight minutes to make an impact. The film is powerful, yet simple and subtly humorous. The entire cast was from Kaaza, a small town in Spiti Valley.

An electronics engineer with an MBA in marketing from the Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow, Nitin quit his corporate career to become a filmmaker. Recently, he won a special award by the British Council for social entrepreneurship in the creative sector.

While working as a brand manager with *India Today* he started a weekend theatre group called 4Play. After a few street plays, they graduated to films. Nitin then quit his job to do a short course in filmmaking from New York (2005).

When he came back to India, he set up a company called Filmkaar Productions.

Nitin's first project was a sci-fi comedy film called 'Formula 69', a humorous adventure of three final year students of IIT who use their crazy inventions to solve a murder mystery and find a cure for terrorism! This feature length digital film was made with the students, staff and alumni of IIT, Delhi.

Nitin's underplayed sense of humour is apparent in all his projects including his website which says: "The revolving Filmkaar logo has been programmed to hypnotise you. Sit in a comfortable position and focus your attention on the logo. Start counting the number of revolutions and as you do so... relax. Relax your breath. Relax your body....Relax your mind. After some time you will begin to feel happy and peaceful. You will also want to donate money to Filmkaar Productions!"

Nitin's global warming film is about Norbu, a small boy who lives in a happy village in a hidden valley. One day, an evil spirit takes control of the weather and starts creating chaos. Now Norbu must journey across vast mountains to find a way to stop this evil spirit and save his village.

He finds a monk who hands him a few seeds to counter the evil spirit. Norbu is surprised and asks, "How can these tiny seeds save my village?" The monk explains that one seed when planted will grow trees which have 1,000 seeds and that means a 1,000 trees that contain a million seeds.

"And once the trees return your problem will disappear," said the monk. When Norbu asks him what if the seeds do not grow into trees or get destroyed,



A still from the film



Nitin Das

the monk says the real seed is the one I have planted in your head. It is that seed that you must grow and spread.

Instead of spreading his message in the form of documentary, Nitin chose to make a fairy tale. The narrative is gently funny and will appeal to young or old, local or global.

According to Nitin, fables and mythological stories like Panchatantra have always inspired him as they are so easy to understand. He feels that fables capture the people's attention. "Maybe the idea of the story came from within I guess," he says.

"I told my story in the form of a fable because it would appeal to a larger audience," he says. "We are trying our best to screen this film in schools and colleges."

The message of the film is to plant trees and spread awareness of how fast global warming is impacting fragile ecosystems.

The film was made possible by Spiticosphere, an NGO in Spiti that works to preserve the culture and environment of the region. The actors were picked from the neighbourhood of the Spiticosphere office. First, there was a round of auditions. All the children who congregated to see the camera took part.

"It took us five days to shoot in Spiti and another five to edit in Delhi," says Nitin who is an ardent warrior of the planet.

You can watch the film on [www.youtube.com/thenitindas](http://www.youtube.com/thenitindas)  
Phone Nitin: 93502 60437 or E-mail: [thenitindas@yahoo.com](mailto:thenitindas@yahoo.com) [thenitindas@gmail.com](mailto:thenitindas@gmail.com); Website [www.filmkaar.com](http://www.filmkaar.com)

(Continued from previous page)

names that had been hurled at them when they were out on the streets. Since many women listed food items such as tomato, pumpkin, *malai* and papaya, one post was devoted entirely to foods that women had been equated with.

The Blank Noise blog has detailed information on legal remedies available to victims of sexual harassment. Some bloggers wanted to start Blank Noise projects in their cities.

Blank Noise interventions try to find out why sexual harassment takes place. The project examines male codes of behavior, cultural expectations and societal perceptions. Blank Noise also puts forward searching questions to its supporters. "Blank Noise asks, do you accept it because you expect it?" says Jasmeen.

The street campaigns exert legitimate claims over public spaces by demanding that women have the right to feel comfortable and secure in a city.

But most importantly, Blank Noise tries to encourage people to take sexual harassment on the streets seriously. It is significant that Blank Noise opposes interchanging the terms "sexual harassment" with the flimsy alternate expression, "eve teasing". The project tries to convey the seriousness of the offence to men and women alike. "Blank Noise does not seek to be about men vs. women, as much as it proposes to address street sexual harassment as everybody's

issue," says Jasmeen.

In Kolkata, the project has just been started, but the excitement is palpable. Sunayana Roy, who is involved with the Kolkata chapter, says: "Blank Noise is very empowering. I've lived in Kolkata for more than five years and I often had unpleasant encounters on the city's streets. It is reassuring to know that there is now a group of people who are thinking of ways in which to fight street sexual harassment."

"The Blank Noise blog encourages you to take photos, if you have a camera- phone, of harassers and upload them onto the blog. It had never struck me that I could do something like that, and, recently, I took photos of men who were harassing me on the Metro," says Sunayana.

The toughest challenge before Blank Noise is to bring down or eliminate instances of street sexual assaults. Jasmeen acknowledges that Blank Noise will have to think of how they can bring more men into the forefront of the project.

Anuj Dasgupta, another member from Kolkata is optimistic: "A big plus point of Blank Noise campaigns is their interactive nature. Such interactive interventions can, if channelised properly, decrease sexual harassment cases."

(If you want to relate testimonies of acts of street sexual harassment you have faced, or if you would like to help start a Blank Noise project in your city, visit the Blank Noise blog: <http://www.blanknoiseproject.blogspot.com/>)



# Delhi's plastic bags in Paris

Riaz Quadir  
Paris

LISTENING to Anita and Shallabh Ahuja in Paris, the fashion capital of the world, makes one hopeful. The irony intensifies when we learn what they offer: stylish handmade goods from lowly, windblown plastic bags that litter the bylanes of Delhi, using a low-tech but innovative process devised by Shallabh, Anita's husband, a BIT, Pilani engineer.

With zeal and magic reminiscent of Mary Poppins and her chimney sweeps, Anita is sweeping clean the streets of Delhi and converting trash into products that companies like Benetton, Ikea and Habitat are ordering.

Listening to Anita talk about her company, Conserve, at the Alter Mundi Gallery in Paris was a bit surreal, as I hastily made my way from the head office of a major French pharmaceutical company, where I had been holding a workshop all day.

On the mezzanine, lined with chairs and open to the public, the Ahujas spoke in English, translated for the largely French audience by young volunteers from design schools who have been shuttling between France, Germany, UK, Sweden and Delhi since the project gained pace. The Indian Ambassador, Ranjan Mathai, after briefly introducing the Ahujas made an apologetic and hasty departure, as though withdrawing his august presence from a rather common affair- rag-pickers!

Despite coverage by BBC, CBS, CNN and The Independent, Conserve is not a household name. Yet, in bits and starts Conserve has made modest gains and is continuing to battle the bureaucracy to get itself recognised as a craft that reduces carbon emission.

Imagine recycling instead of incinerating eight billion plastic bags made annually in the US alone. Conserve could become a prototype for recycling tril-



Anita Ahuja (third from left) at her presentation in Paris.

lions of plastic bags littering the planet and spread wealth to the economically deprived. The 300 families they employ now earn about Rs 4,000 a month.

Anita's ambition hasn't been fully satiated by the fashion gods of Paris. She will be exhibiting her products at the Dali Museum. The message is clear: from the land of ascetic Gandhi, whose far-sighted solution was to reduce consumption, comes another: if you cannot give up consumption, do so with a smaller carbon footprint.

LAKSHMAN ANAND



## Amazing Krishna Sobti

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

AGE has not blunted Krishna Sobti's candour and pluck. She has a long list of titles which have won literary acclaim. Her epic, *Zindaginama*, was honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award, some years ago.

Most of all Sobti has a special place in the hearts of women for her unabashed portrayal of women as strong characters.

Author Nirmal Verma described her as 'the most authentic living voice of Partition and Independence,' at the launch of the translated version of two of her books, 'To hell with you Mitro,' (*Mitro Marjani*) and 'Memories Daughter' (*Daarse Bichhudi*), by Katha.

It isn't easy to translate titles in Hindi or regional languages into English. There is the risk of losing that touch and feel of words which best describe what the author was saying. Katha has done justice. Deftly translated, the books retain their authenticity.

Sobti herself was full of verve at the launch. She said she was 'glad to be alive.' In 1966 when *Mitro Marjani* was published it created a storm for its frank depiction of a woman's need for love and sex. The uproar it caused, said Sobti, was something of a surprise to her. But she soldiered on speaking her mind with her pen.

'Memories Daughter' came at a time of hatred, during Partition, when she too found herself trapped in those voices. Writing the

book reaffirmed her faith in humaneness, she said.

"Writing is a lonely, serious matter not a hobby," remarked Sobti.

It's important, she said, to interact with people, hear the plot, feel the anguish, merge reality and imagination. Writing isn't just a play of words.

The last century gave Sobti a big tapestry to explore: she was born under British rule, lived through the freedom struggle, and saw the struggle of a new nation trying to find its feet. "*Bhasha* writers still have number two status and continue to be called vernacular writers," rued Sobti.

"Good English writers tend to occupy disproportionate space," said Nirmal Verma. "Those who write in English don't always read writers in Hindi or regional languages whereas most regional writers have read the English writers."

India's best stories have come from the pen of *bhasha* writers. There is deep interest in what they write and what they say. But there aren't enough sensitive translators around. Verma suggested a foundation for 'linguistic authenticity.'

The book launch ended with a performance by Asmita, a group that does socially relevant theatre. A chapter of *Mitro Marjani* was read out. Strong, passionate voices filled the room, bringing alive Sobti's vibrant character, Mitro.

Both books cost Rs 200 each.  
For details phone: 011 26524350, 2652 4511.



# Living

## BODY & SOUL

**Be different, look within. There is always more to life. Reach out to alternatives. Heritage, eco-tourism, green cures, traditional foods, buy from NGOs, spiritual talk, organic counter, where to donate, where to volunteer, web watch.**

## Take a real village break

**Susheela Nair**  
Hessarghatta

If you long to experience the ambience of rural India take an hour's drive to Our Native Village Resort in Hessarghatta, on the outskirts of Bangalore. With its mud brick edifices, quaint thatched roofs and a landscape dotted with replicas of engraved stones (Veerakallu) that tell tales of heroic kings and knights, this resort has all the flavour of a traditional Indian village.

What makes Our Native Village Resort so exclusive and unique is that it is India's first 100 per cent eco resort. The resort generates its own power, harvests rainwater and reuses waste. The resort has a natural swimming pool which meets world standards.

There are instructors who can train you to be a qualified bullock cart driver. They will issue you a Bullock Cart Driving Licence.

Conceived by CB Ram Kumar, an NRI and ex-ad professional, Our Native Village Resort is based on rural architecture, a mix of red oxide, terracotta tiles, granite and stone pillars.

The resort's 25 rooms are airy, spacious and comfortable, and have been planned carefully for natural light and ventilation. You get all your regular conveniences. The soaps and shampoos provided to guests are organic.

Right from the ethnic paintings on the rough hewn walls of the rooms to the rustic activities on offer, Our Native Village Resort tries to capture the flavour of rural India.

You can saunter around leisurely or drive up to monuments and temples. Take a long invigorating walk in this area's expansive meadows covered with groves of trees.

You can unwind by playing rural games like kite-flying, hop-scotch, *gilli danda* and catapulting in a shooting range at the resort. Milking a cow, organic farming, ploughing a field, bicycle rides through the countryside and bullock cart rides are invigorating activities you can do here.

Those who are artistically inclined can try their hand at pottery making, basket weaving, rangoli or garland making.

Nearly 60 per cent of the resort's water needs are met by rainwater harvested from roofs and collected into a 60,000 litres rainwater tank. Even the bricks used to construct the resort were 'stabilised mud bricks' made from mud excavated from the foundation and the construction site.

Most of the roofs are arched panels which have oven baked mud tiles. There



Our Native Village Resort has a natural swimming pool (above). One of the rooms (below).

**You can unwind by playing rural games, ploughing a field, milking a cow, cycling or going on a bullock cart ride.**



(Continued on page 34)



# Yashtimadhu for dry eyes

## GREEN CURES

### Ask Dr GG



*I work on the computer six days a week, sometimes for over eight hours. My eyes have become very dry and red as a result. I have tried allopathic eye drops to heal the dryness but these provide temporary relief. There is bleeding in one eye. Please advise.*

Dryness and redness of the eye are side effects of constant work on the computer. It can be managed by the following application on both eyes, regularly for a period of three months.

Pour medicated water (decoction) on both the eyes twice daily in the morning and after work.

#### Preparation of decoction of Yashtimadhu:

Yashtimadhu – 80 gms, crush and boil in 560 ml of water till the water boils down to 280 ml. Filter the decoction through a fine cloth. Make sure that there are no sedimented particles in the filtered decoction. Allow it to cool. Take half of the decoction and mix with equal quantity of milk and 10 ml of honey. Dip a cotton swab into this mixture of decoction and pour it into the eyes (in supine/slanting posture). Continue this process for 30 minutes.

*About a month ago, I ate a bowl of mangoes and realised too late that it was full of worms. Since then I am getting stomach problems like acidity, pain and loose stools. Please tell me what I should do.*

The expressed symptoms are partially psychological. One bowl of worm-infested mangoes should not trouble you for more than a week. However, take the following formulation for two months.

Take a handful of Krishna tulasi, 10 gms of crushed jeera, 10 gms of crushed coriander seeds, 10 gms of peeled and crushed small onion. Boil these together in 500 ml of water till water quantity reduces to 125 ml. Take 60 ml at 10 am and 60 ml at 4 pm for one month.

*I have just recovered from a bout of viral fever. The problem is that the cold has settled into my lungs. I have wheezing at night and my lungs feel heavy and pain slightly. I don't have a running nose. I only get some relief when I sneeze. Please advise.*

Your symptoms show that you have not completely recovered from the

viral fever. For this condition, take one whole plant of Dronapusphee (Leucas cephalotes) and Sahadevi (Conyza cinerea), wash and crush well. Boil it in 500 ml of water till the water reduces to 120 ml. Take 60 ml at 6 am on an empty stomach and 60 ml at 6 pm. Along with this you can take 15 ml of Indukantham kashayam and 30 ml of Chitrakasava after every meal for one month. Always drink hot water. Head bath should be taken preferably twice a week. Apply kachooradi choorna on the peak of your head after bath.

*My 10-year-old sister has white patches on her face. Doctors say it is due to calcium deficiency. She has no history of worms. Please advice.*

#### Deepti

A direct consultation with any Ayurvedic physician is advisable in this condition. Till that period, regular intake of 15 ml of fresh Amlakkee (Amla) juice and fresh Haridra (turmeric) juice with 10 ml of honey is beneficial. It will promote the liver function which will in turn help in good digestion of food.

*I am 26. My hair started greying when I was 16, and it has turned completely white now. Even my beard has started greying. Why is this happening? My hair is very lifeless. Please suggest a remedy for the increasing greyness.*

#### G Mahendra

From your letter, it reveals that your metabolism is not proper due to malnutrition. This reflects in your body in the form of greying of hair, etc. It requires some extensive treatment called Panchakarma therapy (special purificatory treatment system in Ayurveda). Panchakarma therapy enhances the proper assimilation of vitamins and minerals from your food. However, it is good to take Triphala churna mixed with 1 tsp of honey and 1 tsp of pure cow ghee at bedtime.

*I am 22-years-old and have a fair complexion. But my face is getting tanned very often these days. Should I use Eladi oil on my face to prevent this? I am from Kerala but currently I am working in Hyderabad.*

#### Liz

You may be getting exposed to sunlight more, if so, please reduce this. Include fruits like grapes, orange, dates and vegetables like carrot, cucumber and leafy vegetables in your diet.

Applying Manjishtadi or Chembaruthyadi coconut oil will give you better results than Eladi coconut oil. Instead of soap try to use green gram powder mixed with hot milk.

*Dr G G Gangadharan is a Joint Director at FRLHT, Bangalore. E-mail: vaidya.ganga@frlht.org*

(Continued from page 33)

is minimal use of steel. Coconut leaves have also been used in places. Organic vegetables are grown on site.

Native Village generates 80 per cent of its own electricity, using solar panels, windmills and biogas plants. Taking us on a guided tour, Ram Kumar, managing director of the resort explained:

"We draw power from the public supply network only for our refrigerators as no renewable energy technology is available for this as yet. The bio-gas plant uses bio-degradable wastes generated from our kitchens which solves the problem of hygienic waste disposal. Besides helping in conservation, this enables us to provide uninterrupted power without the use of back up power supply systems like diesel fuelled generators."

The resort has a windmill with a capacity of 3.3 KVA, while the combined capacity of the 80 solar panels is 6.6 KVA. All the energy that is generated by the windmill and the solar panels is stored in an array of batteries. The rooms are connected to these.

Recycle and wherever possible reuse, that's the mantra. All waste generated is treated on site and mostly reused. Vegetable food waste goes into the bio-gas plant and non vegetarian food waste (mainly bones) are used as plant food for their rich calcium content. All 'grey' water from the kitchens and wash basins from the rooms is sent through a reed water bed for purification and then used for gardening to feed the water bodies that are part of the resort's landscape.

All 'black' water from the toilets and water closets is drained into leach pits for natural treatment and later used as manure. The farm also uses the slurry from



Ram Kumar

the biogas plant along with its water directly after dilution, as it is a rich source of organic fertiliser. All the waste generated is treated using leach pits, reed water pits and recycling processes using a biogas digester.

The natural pool is a combination of a swimming pool and a pond. Aquatic weeds that surround the pool keep it clean. Water is removed from the pool every day and reused in a farm adjoining the resort. The swimming pool and the regeneration area are separated from each other by a barrier that ends just below the water level.

Chemicals like chlorine are not used to purify the water in the swimming pool. The regeneration zone keeps the water clean by growing a variety of aquatic plants and reeds. Due to biological processes, decomposition of organic material and micro organisms takes place. The plants need the nutrients that are released through this decomposition process and hence they digest and biologically cleanse the water. The purification levels conform to world standards. So you can enjoy a swim without worrying about bacteria or harsh chemicals affecting your skin.

Ram Kumar has launched The Foundation To Enable Eco-Living (FEEL) which will play the role of facilitator between citizens and resource pools. So, if you are contemplating installing say a bio-gas plant or rainwater harvesting system, FEEL will come to your aid by taking you to the right people. As Ram Kumar puts it, "We have to start at the micro level and this is our first step to adopt simple eco-living practices in households."

Contact: Our Native Village Resorts Pvt. Ltd., Tel: 080-411 40909, Email: bookings@ournativevillage.com  
Tariff: Deluxe Room- Twin Occupancy. The tariff ranges from •Rs 4,000-Rs.6,000 depending on the season.



The Arpana Trust helps rural women in Haryana to learn handicraft skills and earn an income. It provides them material, design and marketing support. The extra income is used by women on nutrition, education or to buy assets like domestic animals. Arpana Trust's exhibition hall displays these products in New Delhi. There are soft, cuddly hand knitted sweaters and blankets for your baby. You can pick up a pretty dress for your little girl too. There are embroidered bed covers, towels, bed sheets, table cloths, kurtas, night wear and lots more. All the products are neatly made and carry the Arpana Trust's stamp of quality.



**Sunny frock**

Price: Rs 325

# Embroidered beauties



**Doll hand towel**

Price: Rs 225



**Tablecloth with six napkins**

Price: Rs 1270



**Mauve dress**

Price: Rs 300



**Table cloth with six napkins**

Price: Rs 1270



**Set of 4 bath towels**

Price: Rs 1070



**Soft sweater with booties**

Price: Rs 210



**Set of 2 hand towels**

Price: Rs 250



**Double bedspreads in glazed cotton**

Price: Between Rs 1300 to 1800



**Little red dress**

Price: Rs 272

**DO VISIT US AT:**

Arpana Community Welfare Centre, NS-5, Street F-9, Munirka Marg (next to MTNL)

Vasant Vihar, New Delhi 110057, Tel: (011) 26151136, Fax: (011) 26154974

E-mail: devotion@arpana.org, Website: www.arpana.org

Contact: Neeta Tandon, Tel: 9871284847



# Tackling winter blues

**Samita Rathor**  
New Delhi

**A**RISTOTLE said "to live happily is an inward power of the soul". To treat unhappiness, we must increase our happiness. To treat darkness, we must increase the light. This principle has profound implications for how we view and treat a sense of depression, lethargy and feeling under the weather. Our reaction to external events is governed by our moods or the state of our inner selves. As our inner moods shift, our ability to enjoy the world around us shifts too. In a happy mood, we can derive joy from the smallest, most insignificant things. In a dark mood, everything is a drag.

Depression is probably something that every human being has experienced at some time. This depression which surfaces especially in winter is a Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and is often called winter time blues or Winter Depression. Most people with SAD experience unipolar depression, but as many as 20 per cent may have or develop a bipolar or manic-depressive disorder. In these cases, persons with SAD may experience depression during the winter and hypomania in summer.

Use this checklist to find out if you are likely to be suffering from depression. It could just be seasonal, a passing phase or something that requires immediate attention.

- Are you finding it difficult to focus, pay attention or concentrate?
- Deep feeling of emptiness and loneliness.
- Sleeping for long hours and still not getting restful sleep at night.
- Waking up with headaches.
- Is the sunlight limited in your area?
- Irritability, tension and inability to tolerate stress.
- Overeating or complete loss of appetite.
- Lack of interest to participate in anything that is usually of interest?
- Craving for sweets.

If you have answered yes to three or more questions you may be depressed. Better safe than sorry! Seek professional help. Depression is manageable and not that uncommon but recognising it is half the battle.

**Here are a few tips to combat and manage your depression.**

- Keep the home well lit. Bright lights help to create an atmosphere of wakefulness rather than a feeling of drowsiness in the environment.
- Stay in sunlight as much as you can in winter. In its absence sitting near the

fireplace is very useful.

- Practice meditation twice a day to relieve emotional, physical, mental and environmental stress.
- Try going to bed as early as possible after sunset. Getting enough quality rest is essential for emotional health and falling asleep at night generates a deep, restful sleep that truly refreshes mind and body.
- Waking up with the rising sun early is critical to prevent depression, because late morning sleeping after 6:00 a.m. causes the channels of communication to be clogged with impurities, leading to dullness of mind, depressed moods and slow communication between heart and mind.
- Just when a balanced wholesome diet is needed most, people who are suffering from seasonal depression neglect their

## SOUL VALUE

body's needs. A healthy nutritional regime with whole grains, carbohydrates, lentils, fresh fruits and vegetables is essential in fighting depression.

- In moments of loneliness it would be a good idea to be in the company of loved ones. It might not completely take away that feeling but could certainly trim it down.
- Oil massage to the body and head daily with suitable oil has many benefits: it increases circulation, allows toxins to be cleared from tissues, invigorates the body, calms the mind and soothes emotions.
- Elimination everyday in the morning is essential. Constipation can cause headache, dullness, fatigue and depression. If your elimination is sluggish or blocked, start your day with cooked apples, prunes and figs. Eat your meals at the same time each day, with the main meal at noon and a lighter meal in the evening.
- Moderate exercise like yoga is another remedy for winter depression. The early morning walk will surely help to make your elimination regular as well.
- In addition yoga asanas in your schedule enhance digestion, cleanse toxins from the channels and cells of your body and improve overall balance and health.
- A problem shared is a problem halved. Psychotherapy, counseling or any complementary therapy which helps the sufferer to relax, accept their illness and cope with its limitations are extremely useful.

The intensity of depression can be from severe to moderate. In non acute cases if it is not dealt with on time it could become a lifelong possession. The question is do we really want to acquire such possessions? Remember a stitch in time saves nine! So if all the people in the world suffering from depression seek help imagine how many more happy people there will be on this planet!

Email samitarathor@gmail.com

# The virtuous tomato

**I**TS round and red and loaded with health. Chefs and doctors sing its virtues. Yes, the tomato has extraordinary qualities. You can eat it raw or cooked. You can dunk it into soups, salads or curries. Pizzas can't survive without tomatoes. In India, you can buy tomatoes through the year. And its prices don't make you cry like the unstable onion.

The tomato was born in South America. In 1519 the tomato travelled to Europe. Its seeds were taken there by Cortez. But the Europeans did not lay out the red carpet. They were suspicious of the bright fruit and thought it was poisonous. So tomatoes were treated, for a while, as decorative plants. Italy was the first to embrace and cultivate the tomato outside South America.

Every winter, tomato soup is a hot favourite. In 1872, Maria Parloa invented the first recipe of tomato soup. In 1897, soup mogul Joseph Campbell came out with condensed tomato soup, a product that brought name and fame to his company and endeared the tomato to people.

Docs have good reason to approve

of the tomato. It is rich in potassium, Vitamin C and Vitamin E. It has lycopene, a carotenoid that reduces the risk of cancer. The tomato also has alpha and beta carotene and lutein. Cooking tomato does not in any way take away from its health benefits. Just remember not to remove the peel because it contains the highest amount of carotenoids.

## Tomato salad

### Ingredients

- ◆ 2 large red tomatoes
- ◆ 1 cucumber, sliced
- ◆ 8 ounces of mozzarella cheese
- ◆ 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- ◆ 1 tablespoon of lemon juice
- ◆ salt and pepper to taste
- ◆ 1/3 cup of chopped basil

**Method:** Slice tomatoes, cucumber and cheese. Layer all the vegetables and cheese and then combine oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Drizzle over salad and top with basil. Chill, if desired.

## Tomato salsa

### Ingredients

- ◆ 5-6 tomatoes



- ◆ 1-2 teaspoons cumin
- ◆ 1/2 teaspoon salt
- ◆ 1-2 cloves of garlic
- ◆ 1-2 teaspoons oregano
- ◆ 1/2 onion
- ◆ 1 small capsicum
- ◆ 1-3 dashes of tabasco sauce

**Method:** Finely chop tomatoes, capsicum and onion. Mix vigorously with all the other ingredients. Add salt to taste. Serve as a sauce with nachos, baked chips, sliced cucumber, carrot or cottage cheese.

## Tomato pasta soup

### Ingredients

- ◆ 3 cups vegetable soup

- ◆ 3/4 cup small pasta
- ◆ 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ◆ 1 onion, chopped
- ◆ 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ◆ 2 spoons rajmah, boiled
- ◆ 2 cups tomatoes, chopped
- ◆ 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- ◆ 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- ◆ salt and pepper to taste

**Method:** Bring vegetable broth to boil in a large pot. Add pasta and cook for 8 to 10 minutes or until al dente. Meanwhile, heat oil in a small skillet over medium heat. Saute onions and garlic until translucent. Stir into pasta and add beans, tomatoes, basil, thyme, salt and pepper.



**Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) is an 80-year-old international NGO which provides specialist financial services to other charities and their supporters.**

**Its vision is: 'A world in which giving in a committed and effective way is a recognised part of everyday life.'**

**CAF's network spreads over six continents. It has network offices in UK (head office), India, Australia, Bulgaria, Russia, South Africa, USA, Brazil.**

**CAF's business model is based on receiving and then grantmaking funds on behalf of donors.**

**We offer donors choice of how to give, whom to give to and when to give.**

**We are neutral to a cause. The causes we support are:**

- Children ● Education ● Care for the Disabled ● Health Care
- Community Development ● Animal Care ● Special Needs
- Livelihood promotion ● Advocacy ● Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation

**In India, CAF started in 1998 and is registered as a charitable trust. CAF India has a list of validated charities for each of the causes it supports and raises funds from individuals and companies to support the non-profit sector.**

**CAF conducts a Due Diligence for charities it supports to ensure the funds are only disbursed to validated NGOs who comply with all the fiscal, legal and regulatory norms of the due diligence procedure. CAF's approach is to support the causes and issues most close to our donors' hearts by providing advice, offering tax effective solutions and creating programs wherever their chosen causes reside. CAF also provides reports on all grants received from the donors.**

**CAF'S PRODUCTS:**

**For companies: Corporate account, Give As You Earn, Matched Giving**

**For individuals: One time donation, Donor Advised Fund Thematic Funds (for Education, for Livelihood, for Chronic Health Care)**

**CAF has consulted with a number of its validated charities for health, education, children, livelihood promotion, special needs and animal care to put together options for the readers of Civil Society. If you are working with a company and would like your organisation to be involved with the community, do contact CAF India.**

**Readers who want to volunteer with or donate to the NGOs listed on these pages can get in touch with Charities Aid Foundation (CAF). Please fill up the form at the end of the list. All NGOs have been validated by CAF. So go ahead and choose your cause.**

**Salaam Baalak Trust**

**Focus:** Support and shelter to street and working children.

Celebrating the spirit of survival among children, the name of the organisation itself sets out its mission: Salaam Baalak means 'Salute the Children'. Inspired by the lives of street children who played an important part in her internationally acclaimed film, Salaam Bombay, filmmaker Mira Nair established the Salaam Baalak Trust (SBT) in 1988. Dedicated to the care and protection of neglected street children,

regardless of caste, colour, creed or religion, SBT provides for the development of street children through an enabling environment. In doing so, it helps the children regain their self-confidence and return to mainstream society and eventually contribute to its development.

Functioning throughout Central Delhi, Salaam Baalak Trust has a range of activities and programmes: **Shelter homes:** Shelter homes set up by SBT such as AASRA, Apna Ghar, Arushi and a Drop-in Shelter provide a convivial and supportive home-like environment for the street children.

**Childline:** This is India's first 24-hour free phone outreach service for children in need of emergency assistance. SBT is in charge of the Central zone of Delhi for this service.

SBT encourages its inmates to engage and participate in the performance of theatre, street plays and puppetry to help them express their emotions and to enable communication and foster teambuilding. SBT also makes available to its inmates various kinds of vocational training as well as income generation and saving schemes to make them economically self-reliant.

**Funding is needed for:** ARUSHI which is specially designed to address the needs of the girl child.

Rs 28,500 per child per annum will support boarding, lodging, school uniforms, clothing, healthcare, transportation, school fee, educational material and entertainment.

**Parikrama**

**Location:** Bangalore

**Focus:** Parikrama Humanity Foundation is a non-profit with a mission to unleash the potential of under served children in urban India. It provides them with equal opportunities and makes the children valuable contributing members of our society.

At Parikrama, the goal is very clear: the non-profit ensures that every child completes school and undertakes education and training to earn a living- be it special vocational training or higher college education. Parikrama works primarily in the field of education, providing education through centres of learning. Parikrama runs four centres of learning in Bangalore and serves over 725 children.

**Funding needed for:** Sponsor a child/class: Parikrama Humanity Foundation runs four schools for street and slum children. We have about 730 children coming to our schools. To ensure that our children come to school regularly Parikrama provides them breakfast, lunch and a glass of protein mix in the evening. It also provides total healthcare and many interventions with the family like de addiction camps, micro funding and vocations skills training for family members. We have had 98 per cent attendance, less than 1 per cent drop

out and 100 per cent attendance at parent-teacher meetings.

**Sponsor one or more class of 30 children each:** The cost of each child per annum is Rs 15,000 which includes education, nutrition, healthcare and community development. It requires Rs 4.5 lakhs to sponsor one class.

**Bus for the school:** Parikrama's four centres are located in four widely spread areas of Bangalore. To ensure that the children come regularly to school it needs to have them picked up from their homes and dropped back after school hours. Having its own school bus will help it to provide this service to the children thus ensuring that attendance is even greater.

We also need to transport our children across our four centres and to the suburbs of Bangalore to link our children to the outside world and provide them the opportunity for greater exposure and experience through field trips. **Approximate cost: Rs 8 lakhs**

**Ananya Trust, Bangalore**

**Focus:** Children and non-formal education

Ananya, established in 1998, is a charitable trust started due to the dearth of schools that provide relevant and meaningful education for underprivileged children in and around Bangalore city. Through Ananya Shikshana Kendra (ASK), it caters to the needs of children who are not admitted to other schools either due to social, physical or academic reasons. Comprising of learning centres, the children are within reach of study material arranged according to learning difficulties they might face. Currently we have 51 children on the rolls, five teaching staff and seven non-teaching staff.

**Funding is needed for:** Ananya requires computer peripherals, consumables, software and a computer teacher. Ananya is starting a programme to introduce computer literacy as part of their curriculum. This will enable the children to become familiar with the world of computers, be eligible for further training in computers and join the IT-enabled profession. It will open up

**SEE HOW FAR YOUR MONEY CAN GO**

Imagine how far your money can go! See much your contribution matters! For a small sum you can help an underprivileged child get an education. You can assist cancer patients get treatment. Your donation can bring back vision to an elderly person. Or your money could reduce the population of street dogs by sterilisation.

Fill up the CAF form on the next page and make a difference.

- **Rs.31000 per annum will** : Support boarding and lodging, school uniforms, clothing, healthcare, transportation, school fee, educational material, entertainment for 1 girl child for 1 year
- **Rs.4000 per annum will** : Support distance education for 1 dropout child
- **Rs. 2750 per annum will** : Support education material, school uniform, mid-day meal, teaching, entertainment and healthcare for 1 child for 1 year.
- **Rs. 6500 per annum will** : Support education material, one meal a day, entertainment and healthcare for 1 child for 1 year.
- **Rs. 2200 per annum will** : Support education, medical and mid-day meal for 1 child for 1 year.
- **Rs.13500 will** : Support home care for 1 cancer patient for 3 months
- **Rs.9000 will** : Support medicines for 10 cancer patients for 1 month

- **Rs.4500 will** : Support nutritional supplements for 10 cancer patients for 1 month
- **Rs.16000 will** : Support one retinal surgery.
- **Rs.8000 will** : Support rehabilitation of one low vision person.
- **Rs.3000 will** : Support Cataract/Squint/Glaucoma Surgery for Children (less than 6 years of age)
- **Rs. 1200 will** : Support one cataract surgery for children (more than 6 years of age)
- **Rs.4300 will** : Support 1 client for Drug Rehabilitation for 1 month (Drug de-addiction, food, supplies and psycho-social support)
- **Rs.14000 will:** Support HIV/AIDS Treatment Care & Support for 1 month for 1 person (medicines, food, diagnostic cost, supplies, linen etc.)
- **Rs.6000 per annum will** : Support an autistic child for the mother-child program
- **Rs.5500 per month will** : Support employment of a professional therapist
- **Rs.4000 per month will** : Support 1 autistic child's education/train and employ a caregiver
- **Rs.2750 per annum will** : Support vital classroom supplies
- **Rs.3500 will** : Support setting up of a livelihood project for a disabled person.
- **Rs.800 will** : Support sterilisation of 1 dog
- **Rs.150 will** : Support anti-rabies vaccination for 1 dog.



other career options for these children who will otherwise have no choice but to follow their parents' profession.

#### *Volunteering Opportunities:*

**Mentoring students especially adolescents:** If volunteers are Bangalore based they can spend weekends with the children mentoring them and acting as friends and guides. This will help to build a long-term association with the children, boost their self-confidence and instill a sense of belonging in them.

**Training children in the use of computers:** Employee volunteers can visit the school on weekends to teach children the creative use of computers in different areas of learning. Volunteers can enable them go beyond basic computer usage to discover the magical world of computers so that classroom learning becomes more interesting, (eg, using available software including graphics and even creating their own software.)

#### **Action for Autism**

**Focus:** Supporting the rights of people with autism and multiple disabilities.

Action for Autism works nationally. It has a range of activities and programmes:

- Diagnosis and assessment of children with autism.
- Education through a specialised school for children with autism called Open Door.
- Recognising the lack of trained professionals to teach children with autism and to cater to the increasing demand for its services, AFA started its own Teacher Training Programme, which has today become a one-year diploma in Special Education DSE-ASD under the Rehabilitation

Council of India.

- Family and parent skill-building through counselling, early intervention, home management and mother & child programs as well as parent-support groups.
- Training of parents and professionals through training workshops.
- Resource provision through AFA's resource centre, the AFA journal, Autism Network and website.
- Advocacy and awareness.

#### **Funding needed for:**

Sponsoring children: Annual cost per child for the mother-child programme is Rs 5,500. This amount sponsors one child, annually. Cost of a professional therapist: Rs 5,000.

#### **Animal India Trust**

**Focus:** Medical care for the street and stray canine population of Delhi.

Animal India Trust was established in March 2002 to help improve the lives of street animals and to promote public awareness of rabies in New Delhi. Its focus is:

- To neuter and provide rabies and vaccination programs.
- Provide assistance to injured or sick animals found on the streets.
- Free medical treatment to pets of economically disadvantaged people.
- Placement of orphaned street puppies in loving homes.

#### **Funding needed for:**

Sterilisation of stray dogs: Rs 800.00 per dog.  
Anti-rabies vaccination of stray dogs: Rs 150 per dog.

#### **Astha**

**Focus:** Providing services to children/persons with disabilities and their families with special focus on communities.

Astha was started in 1993. The rights of individuals with disabilities

have been at the core of Astha's belief and work ethics. Astha's aim is to:

- Maximise awareness about the issue.
- Increase the accessibility of people with disability in society.
- Integrate children with disability into the mainstream.

#### **Funding needed for:**

Sponsor a child with special needs. It costs just Rs 12,000 per annum. This will cover physiotherapy, speech therapy, special educator, art and craft.  
Or sponsor an event: One event costs Rs 5,000. This may be for annual picnic/festival celebrations/Sports Day.

#### **Ritinjali**

**Focus:** Education and community development.

Ritinjali was started in 1996 with the aim of working in the field of education and community development.

- Their aim is to provide holistic education towards nurturing empowered, responsible citizens who will be capable of providing not only for themselves but also contributing actively to their local communities through enterprise, self awareness and self induced social responsibility.

#### **Funding needed for:**

Education for slum children: Annual cost per child : Rs.6,300 to support education material, one meal a day, entertainment and healthcare.

#### **Tihar Jail, New Delhi**

Ritinjali provides counselling, rehabilitation and legal representation services to juvenile inmates aged 16 to 21. You can volunteer for legal assistance, counseling and advocacy programs **Ritinjali's Second Chance School, Mahipalpur, New Delhi**  
A school for youth who did not get

the first chance. You can volunteer for youth mentoring, vocational training, placement, employment programs and entrepreneurship programs.

#### **Sahara House**

**Focus:** Support for the Chemical and Alcohol Dependent and HIV/AIDS Infected/Affected Individuals.

Sahara means support, and since 1978, Sahara House has been a refuge, spearheading the provision of effective treatment to drug users, alcoholics, the mentally challenged and those infected/affected by HIV/AIDS.

This residential care facility focuses on counselling with sessions covering detoxification, medical attention, physical education, self-development, financial and household management.

**Other programme areas include:**

- Drug awareness and prevention through its street theatre group.
- Income generation opportunities to its beneficiaries.
- A pre and post-kindergarten school in Sahara House for destitute and deprived children.

#### **Funding needed for:**

Drug Rehabilitation Programme: Cost per client per month: Rs.4, 290 which will take care of drug de-addiction, food supplies, psycho-social support.  
**HIV/AIDS Treatment Care & Support Programme:**

**Cost per bed per day:** Rs 475 which will take care of food, medicines, referral, diagnostic cost, medical support, supplies, linen etc.

Individual donors can give any amount they wish. The money can be used by the home to buy dry rations, medicines, computers and for a water cooler at the men's rehabilitation centre.

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CAF

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Full information on CAF and other charity matters may be found on our - website: [www.cafonline.org](http://www.cafonline.org)

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